

1851

Considerations for Young Men (Part 1)

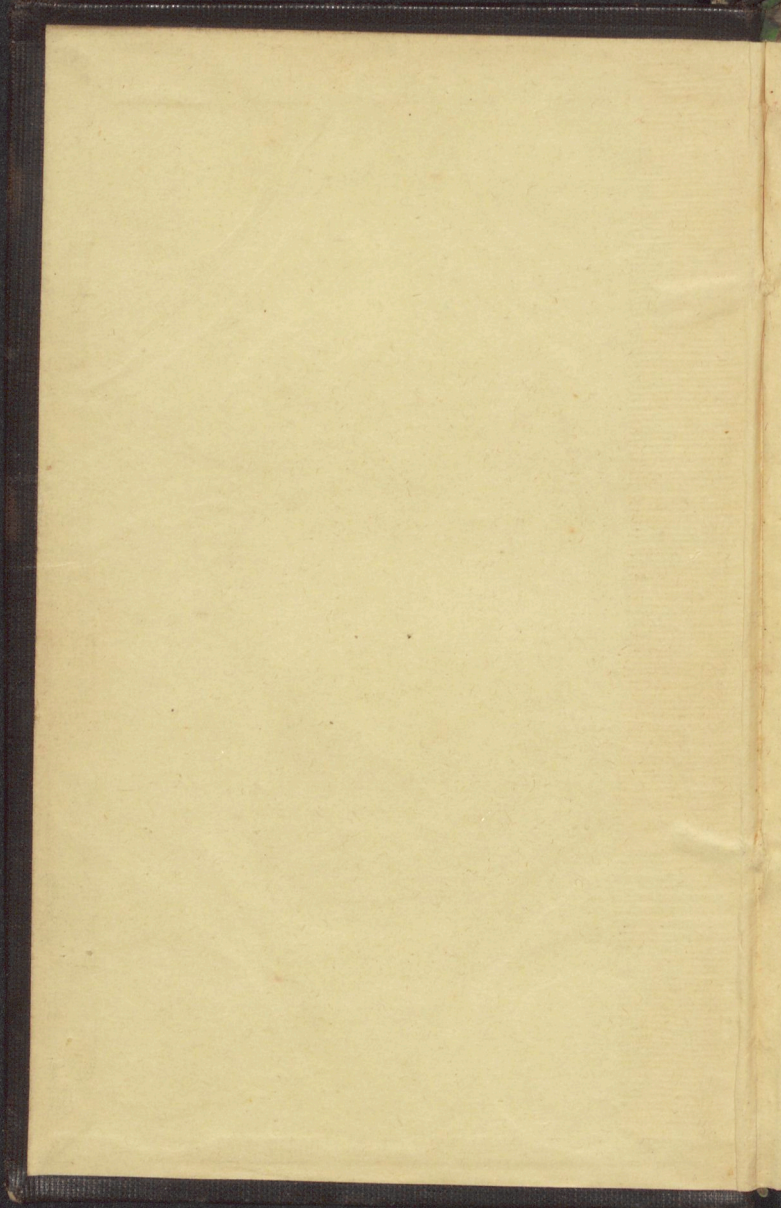
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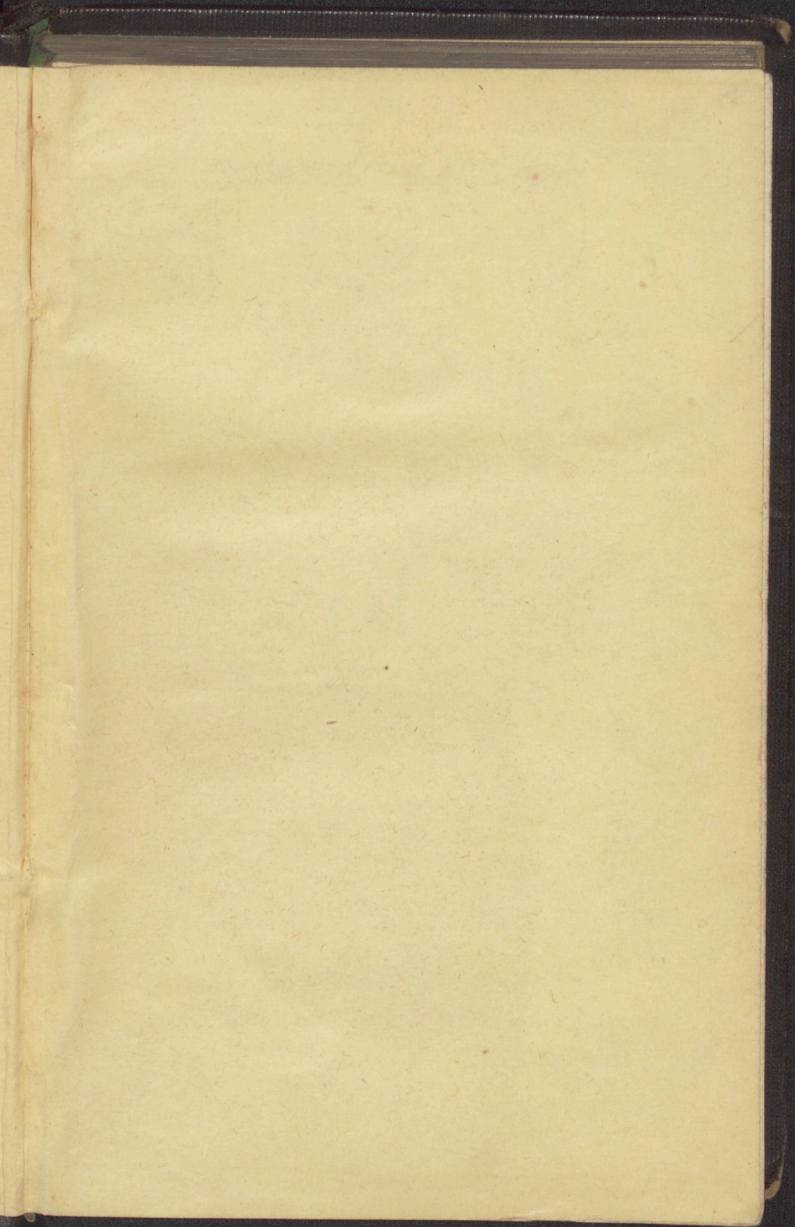
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CONSIDERATIONS

FOR

YOUNG MEN.

BY REV. J. B. WATERBURY, D. D.

AUTHOR OF "ADVICE TO A YOUNG CHRISTIAN," ETC.

"Virtue, not rolling suns, the mind matures;
The man of wisdom, is the man of years."

PUBLISHED BY THE
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,
150 NASSAU-STREET, NEW YORK.

Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1851, by JARED
B. WATERBURY, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the South-
ern District of the State of New York.

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PREFACE.

THE author of the following letters having been placed, by the providence of God, in circumstances favorable to acquiring a knowledge of the feelings, principles, and habits of young men, has ventured, with dependence on divine aid, to address them in relation to subjects the most important which can engage their attention.

The class of individuals to whom this work is inscribed, are the hope of our country. They embody, in a great degree, the influence which is destined to sway the moral and political interests of the nation.

The author is deeply sensible of the responsibility of addressing so large and so respectable a class in the community, but he hopes that a perusal of the following sheets will convince his young readers that his intentions at least are benevolent.

The epistolary form was adopted, because it admitted, as the author supposed, greater familiarity and directness; and also, because there is, unhappily, among many, a prejudice against essays, lectures, or sermons.

Let it not be supposed, however, that these letters are intended to displace or supersede the many valuable sermons and lectures to the young which are already before the public: far from it; they are designed as a humble concomitant. The author intended them as a manual which the hand of Christian benevolence might offer to a friend, and which the pious parent might commit to a beloved son upon leaving the parental roof for a residence among strangers.

CONSIDERATIONS
FOR
YOUNG MEN.

PLEASURES AND ANTICIPATIONS.

LETTER I.

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH COMPARED.

To the brief space between childhood and maturity the man of experience reverts with mingled emotions of pleasure and of pain. The gay visions of life were then opening on the enraptured mind. Every scene was fresh to the eye, and every pleasure wore the charm of novelty.

Childhood, by some, is called the happiest portion of life. Its innocent gayety, its confiding sweetness, its buoyant and affectionate playfulness, its gush of tears, and its glow of returning joys, throw around it an indescribable charm. Poets have sung of it as if it were a seraphic state of existence. The

victim of misfortune and the sated votary of pleasure have sighed over the period of their childhood, as carrying with it into oblivion the only pittance of happiness which the Creator had been pleased to assign them.

But even childhood has its cares and its sorrows. Ye who have just passed from its scenes, are prepared to admit that it is a state by no means free from solicitude, nor fraught with all the felicity which some have ascribed to it. Tears of anguish, sobs that almost burst the young heart, broken toys, and bleeding wounds, successively agitate it. Even disappointment, which, to us who have almost forgotten our childish feelings, seems a later inheritance of misery, mingled in our earliest draughts its bitter ingredients. The toy, which at first sight produces a momentary rapture, losing in a day all its attraction, lies broken and neglected; and the promised visit, hailed with clapping hands and laughing eyes, often ends in weariness, satiety, or tears. Still, childhood has its pleasures, its moments of delight and of ecstasy. Its sleep is an oblivion of its sorrows, and apparently a continued dream of delight. If disappointed in its pleasures, its versatile feelings open a new channel of happiness. If its tears are frequent, they are quickly dried; and often, while the big drop still hangs on the eyelid, the smile of merriment comes stealing from behind. Every stage of our mortal journey has its hopes

and its disappointments, its cares and its alleviations, its joys and its sorrows. That gracious Being to whom we owe our existence, and "from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift," has thought fit neither wholly to mar that existence, nor unceasingly to mete out its pleasures. From the cradle to the grave, it is with all of us a checkered scene. So soon as our infant feet tread the path of life, they feel the pricking thorns; and we quickly perceive, that however beautiful in the commencement, that path "leads but to the grave."

Youth with its teeming hopes soon succeeds to childhood. The sportive feeling that perished almost in its birth, gives place to the rush of passion and the play of imagination. Childish sports cease, and the kindling eye looks forward to the pursuits of manhood with instinctive reverence and desire.

There is something in the business and pleasures of mature life which strikes strongly on the youthful imagination. The inexperienced mind contemplates them as the sure indications of that felicity for which it pants. Hence, when the youth is scarcely free from the restraints of the nursery, he begins to imitate the gait and bearing of manhood. He affects to scorn his infantile amusements, and chides the tardy lapse of time which detains him from this enviable consummation. Poor mistaken youth, how little dreamest thou of the cares that vex and the

afflictions that depress the heart of man! Thine eye all eagerness, and thy breast all hope, fasten only on the lighter coloring of life. The respect which the wisdom of years receives, and the pleasures which the wealth of mammon commands, stand out to thy vision in bold relief, and excite those restless desires which must die by satiety, if not by disappointment. The care-worn countenance thou discernest not. The remorse of ill-gotten treasure lies too deep for thy scrutiny. The disappointment that turns back on the heart of the voluptuary, and the vanity that is felt to attach to every earthly pursuit, come not within the scope of thy anticipations.

I cannot but think that the period of youth is, after all, the happiest portion of man's earthly existence. I speak now of those upon whom the sanctifying influence of religion has never come. Viewed as a tenant of earth, and apart from his relations to eternity, the man who has passed the heyday of youth has certainly left behind him the most beautiful and fragrant part of his journey. He has bid adieu to scenes of innocent delight, which even memory feels mournful in reviewing. Pleasures which had a relish have now become insipid, and hopes which were then in blossom have been blasted, or at best have only borne the fruits of disappointment.

There may be a few favored exceptions, but the

surprise which those few excite is proof of the general sentiment we have expressed.

Let me then address to you some considerations and cautions connected with the present period of your existence. I shall do it with tenderness and affection. I shall do it as one standing on the line between buoyant youth and sedate manhood; retaining, as I trust, the fire of the former, though chastened somewhat by the incipient cares and afflictions of the latter. With you I can sympathize. I know your hopes, your fears, and your feelings. I was born with the same characteristics, and was educated in the same manner. I have indulged the same anticipations, and have shared in similar pleasures. I wish you to know that you are enjoying probably the happiest period of your earthly career. I would not drop one ingredient of misery in your cup, nor extinguish one generous thought, nor curb one rational anticipation. On the contrary, it shall be my aim in the observations I shall offer, to heighten your enjoyments, to displace an earthen cup by a golden chalice, to turn your feet from sterile moors to fragrant groves, and to open upon your vision fruits that never become tasteless, flowers that never fade, and a source of happiness that shall increase for ever.

LETTER II.

THE PERIOD OF YOUTH NOT ALWAYS HAPPY.

THE remark in the preceding letter, that youth is probably the happiest period of our earthly existence, needs qualifying, and requires a more full explanation.

There may be circumstances in which the assertion cannot be true. A sickly constitution may cast a gloom over the early stage of being, and those limbs which might have bounded like the roe, may be withered by disease or weakened by hereditary infirmity. I have seen the eye that should have flashed with pleasure grow languid in its socket; and beheld the beauteous boy or the lovely girl withering under the pensive watchfulness of an anxious parent. Days that might have been winged with delight, hours that might have fled gaily away, dragged on their tedious course, and the pale and fettered child could only feed in fancy on the joys which he was forbidden to taste.

There is something mournfully interesting in such a scene. It seems as if a flower, which had opened in beauty, which had needed the sun to gild and the dew to refresh it, was drooping and dying in a confined and sickly atmosphere. In manhood we

expect misfortune ; in old-age we anticipate disease and death ; but youth, that buoyant, blissful period of life seems, by this premature weakness, to experience a double disappointment. But He who orders every event, "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." He gives the patience necessary to bear these early calamities, and often sanctifies the afflictions of youth to the soul.

After years of suffering, nature sometimes reacts, and the constitution gains vigor. It cannot be said, under these circumstances, that youth was more happy than manhood ; for what is life, and what are its pleasures, if there be not health to enjoy, and a heart to relish them ?

I can suppose a case more marked than the one already mentioned, in which it will be evident that youth was not the most desirable or happy portion of present existence. The passions of the young are not always under a wholesome restraint. They have not learned that unlawful indulgence is the death-blow to happiness. They will not believe that sin "at last biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." They wish to make trial for themselves. They give their ear to the call of pleasure, and follow her footsteps to the precipice of death. They bind on the chaplet she wreathes, and mingle in the orgies she celebrates. Thus that period of life so pregnant with innocent delight if rightly employed, and so fraught with instruction if faith-

fully improved, is by the young sensualist murdered in the pursuit of low and unworthy pleasures. I cannot fully describe his condition. It is beyond the powers of my pen. Look into his blood-stained eye. See the wreck of moral principle in every line of his countenance. The open, frank, and manly air is gone. He removes from the virtuous, and mingles only with the profane. Blunted are his feelings, and sensualized is his soul.

But such a hapless—shall I not say hopeless?—youth has sometimes been reclaimed. There have been instances of a thorough and permanent change. Shame, perhaps, has operated to rouse him from his sensuality and sever him from his dissipated companions. The tears of a tender sister, or the piteous look of a heart-broken mother, have gone to his obdurate heart, and wakened in him the resolution of amendment. That grace which saves the “chief of sinners” has arrested him in his mad career, turned his sinful pleasures into wormwood, fixed his eye in penitence on the cross, and made him a regenerated and happy creature.

I cite this example not to encourage the profligate. God forbid. I give it as among the rare instances of amendment and of mercy. So rare, so “few and far between,” that while one such moral miracle occurs, while one such reformation takes place, thousands and tens of thousands drop into the gulf of death, and sink to rise no more. They

are lost to themselves, lost to the world, and lost for ever.

Should these pages fall under the eye of one who has begun to walk in this forbidden path, let them prove a barrier to his further progress; let them warn him of the dangers that threaten. It is no unreal vision that I have sketched: and if your character begin to bear even a remote resemblance to that I have described, remember, that while you may imitate a reformed profligate in his wickedness, you may never experience the mercy by which he was rescued. You may die as you live; and your death, instead of being lamented, may only provoke from the unpitying multitude the passing remark, that you are "better dead than alive." But there are those who contemplate you as immortal, and who connect with your wickedness and impenitence the wretchedness of your eternal doom. And Oh, if you have a mother—if your guilty career have not broken her heart and sealed her eyes in death—if she yet live to follow you to an early grave, she will pour the scalding tear upon your tomb, and like one of old, exclaim, "Would God I had died for thee, my son, my son!"

It cannot be supposed that the period of youth, when spent in habits of vice and dissipation, or dozed away in ignoble sloth, is to be preferred. I have seen those who could scarcely speak of their youth but with tears, and who shuddered as they

thought of the vortex from which they had been rescued. They would fain have blotted out that portion of their existence; and whenever they reflected upon it, the involuntary sigh of regret was followed by the upward breathing of gratitude.

“Remember not,” says one who had entered the vale of years, “the sins of my youth.” Who cannot echo the prayer, and enter into the spirit of the sentiment? Who can look back on that reckless, yet comparatively happy period, and not blush at the follies, and weep over the iniquities he has committed? We call it “innocent,” and so it may be, compared with the fearful progress in sin which marks the career of maturer years; but *perfectly* innocent it *cannot* be. The fairest specimen of frank, ingenuous, uncorrupted youth will not bear to be examined by *one* test, or measured by *one* unbending rule. There is a law which speaks of inward purity, and which metes out its penalty for thoughts that are evil. Lovely may be the early development of character, beautiful and auspicious as the morning light, but none *so* beautiful or lovely as not to need the grace that sanctifies, and the precious blood that redeems. None can claim exemption from guilt, and none can venture with impunity to neglect the fountain of cleansing; but when to native charms there is superadded the hallowed influence of religion, how fair, how beautiful, how blessed is the character of youth.

LETTER III.

INDOLENCE A BARRIER TO THE PLEASURES OF
YOUTH.

IN addition to the influence of profligate habits, I remarked that indolence subtracts greatly from youthful enjoyments. Where the former do not exist, the latter is often indulged. Generally, I acknowledge, they coexist.

Indolence throws open the avenues of the soul to temptations, and the great fallen spirit, in his malignant march through the earth, seizes upon the occasion, and draws the unwary youth into his toils. By indolence the moral principle is weakened, and the impulse of passion is increased. It is the gateway through which a troop of evil spirits gain admission to the citadel, and compel conscience to surrender to base desire. Activity in honorable pursuits strengthens moral principle, makes the conscience vigilant, and furnishes a breastwork of defence, impregnable to the assaults of the tempter.

But there are instances where, apparently, vice is kept at bay, and a decent exterior is preserved, while the individual is characterized by the most shameless inactivity and indolence. He sleeps away the seed-time of his existence. Roused, neither by the love of distinction, a principle so naturally

operative in the young heart, nor by the entreaties of a parent, anxious for the future reputation of the child, he has been willing to fold his arms in ignoble sloth, while others have run and obtained the prize.

This is seen in every walk of life—in humble poverty and abounding wealth. More commonly, however, indigence counteracts the causes of indolence; and if there be a spark of youthful fire in the soul, the stimulant of necessity will operate as a spur to vigorous action. Thence it is, that from the low walks of life have risen some of the greatest statesmen, most learned divines, and most gifted geniuses. Their poverty has been the spring of their exertions. Though denied in youth the advantages which wealth commands, they have found more than an equivalent in their own unconquerable aspirations. What seemed to be an obstacle, became an impulse; and the impediments in their path to usefulness and reputation, which would have frightened back less noble spirits, only served, like the interposing Alps in the march of Hannibal, to make their victory the more glorious and complete. Oh that I could reach the ear of every youth in the land, wake up in his soul those generous desires, and urge him to those active exertions which should be at once his safeguard from temptation and the pledge of his success.

There is scarcely a more melancholy sight than

a young man gifted by a gracious Providence with a mind susceptible of improvement, dozing away the most precious period of existence, wasting his time, burying his talent, and squandering the money which a generous parent or guardian appropriates for his benefit. Go to our colleges, and you will see many such. Yes, in the very portals of science, in the temples consecrated to learning, where hangs the chaplet for which a band of noble youth are competing; there, even *there*, shall you see many who are content to leave the classic abode, bearing the name, but reaping neither the pleasures nor the honors of a scholar. Surely the opening manhood of such can be characterized by little of that pleasure which accompanies a diligent and successful application of our powers.

Besides the indolence natural to us all, there is, in many of these melancholy examples, a sort of contempt for a habit of assiduous and persevering diligence. They consider it a mark of incompetency, or at least view it as indicating the absence of genius. It is the gay, easy, careless bearing of lofty spirits which they covet. How much it is to be regretted that such an infatuation should take possession of our youth. Where it exists, time, talents, opportunities, all are wasted. The precious hours for improvement speed away, while the merry idler saunters with his companions or whistles his ditty, as if the height of science were attained, and

the honors which she has to bestow already in his possession.

Such a spendthrift of time and privilege could scarcely claim our sympathy, even were he subjected to disappointment and disgrace. The period between childhood and maturity is not with him a season of happiness. Felicity is too sacred a name and too rare an attainment to be appropriated either to the low pleasures of sensuality, or to the dreaming apathy of the idler.

There have been instances, though they are of rare occurrence, in which individuals have been roused from this dronish and dissipated state of mind. When almost too late, when the seed-time of intellect was well-nigh gone, they have awaked as from a dream, and begun at the eleventh hour to redeem their wasted opportunities. A thorough reform in their habits has taken place. From being indolent they have become industrious, and instead of realizing the gloomy fears which their careless habits very justly excited, they have proved a credit to their friends and an ornament to their country.

Though such instances of reformation may at long intervals occur, we have no right, as observed in the case of the profligate, to make them an apology for present indolence, nor to found upon them a hope of our own future amendment.

To the youth of inattentive and idle habits, I

would address the language once applied to a still more fearful lethargy, "Awake, thou that sleepest." Shake off that mental drowsiness. Like the inactivity of the body, which "clothes a man in rags," this intellectual supineness will cover the character with disgrace. Your companions, those who started with you in the race, are about to distance you. They will leave you to dishonor and to self-reproach. You will have to meet the looks of disappointed friends, and bear the taunts of your successful contemporaries. You will be gathering the materials of future misery, forfeiting the little happiness which earthly pursuits, even when successful, can bestow; and last, though certainly not least, subjecting yourself to the displeasure of Him who gave the talent, and the opportunity to improve it, and who may charge you with having been "a wicked and slothful servant."

LETTER IV.

YOUTH, FREE FROM VICE, A FAVORED PERIOD.

I COMMENCED with the assertion that youth was probably the most favored period of our mortal journey. To this proposition several exceptions have been stated.

I cannot, however, admit that the proportion of profligate youth in our favored land is so fearfully great as some have been led to suppose. There is a large class whose early habits have been carefully cultivated, whose principles are in the main correct, and whose deportment and industry are at least commendable.

In the exceptions adduced, I have supposed that the period of youth, though abused or wasted, was succeeded by a reformation in manhood. In these cases the proposition before us cannot of course be sustained; but where there is at least a good character, and the development of mind is accompanied by industry and activity, we have no hesitation in asserting that, apart from the influences of religion, the space between childhood and maturity is the happiest period.

If you look merely at pleasures which in themselves are innocent, and become the occasions of guilt only when pursued as the ultimate end of life,

you will find that none partake of them with so keen a relish as the young and buoyant mind. To such a mind they have all the freshness of untasted delight, and all the charm of novelty. 'Tis oft-repeated draughts which deprive the sweetest beverage of its flavor. The landscape which always lies under the eye ceases, in some degree at least, to delight the vision. With the youth all is new, and all of course is attractive and interesting. He understands not the indifference with which the eye of experience looks upon life's fleeting joys, nor comprehends the result of wisdom's researches, that all on earth is "vanity and vexation of spirit."

It is not natural that he should. His being is just unfolding, and his mind maturing, amid scenes which wake into rapture the expanding faculties of the soul. He has not so often drank of the cup of pleasure as to be satiated, nor driven the circle of life's wearisome duties until the jaded body becomes a burden. Free from present solicitude, and alive to every new impression of delight, he is constantly gathering joys along his bright path, and anticipating fairer scenes that are in reserve. The distracting cares of manhood have not smothered the strong affections which still cling to parents and to home, while every thing around him upon which the eye fastens or to which the ear gives heed, adds a new item to his little stock of knowledge.

Childhood, scarcely conscious of any thing be-

yond the small limits of the nursery, taken up with its own little momentary gratification, has neither eyes to see, nor feelings to appreciate the variety, the glory, and the sublimity which are shed over the works of God. But to the youthful vision, all nature spreads out her cabinet of beauties, and woos him to investigate at every step. Thoughts rush in upon him from every object, and often produce, while the mind is yet undisciplined, a gush of sensations, a thrill of delight, which speaks in his eye, but can find no utterance on his tongue. In fact, youth, if the expression may be admitted, is the poetry of existence.

Who can have forgotten the deep delight that glowed in the soul, when vernal breezes, summer clouds, and the waving beauties of flood and field began to fix the eye and interest the feelings? There is a freshness in these scenes, and a secret and mysterious sympathy with them, which, in after-life, is apt to diminish, if not entirely to fade from the mind.

In this life of toil severer duties soon demand the attention, and bustling activity succeeds to the romance of youth. The dry detail of commerce, or the strife for political elevation, with all the tedious and vexatious cares that attend such pursuits, soon chase away this early glow of feeling, and with it a pleasure of no common kind. Repetition even of innocent gratification often produces satiety, and the

frequent participation of any earthly pleasure is apt to be succeeded by disgust. But youth is in a measure inexperienced in such disappointments. Come they must, and alas, they always come too soon; but until they are felt, he has much happiness from a world to which his Creator has adapted him.

We who have left behind us this part of our journey, would not turn back to chide you, my youthful reader, for the innocent recreations you pursue. We would not sigh at having parted with them, nor be envious of you who now possess them. We have no disposition to curtain this earth with sadness, nor would we blight your joys in the bud.

You must, however, permit me, as we pass along, to point out the line where innocent gratification ends, and where guilty indulgence commences. You must suffer me to correct you if erring, and affectionately to apprise you of danger. If your pleasures are so great, you must let me direct your eye to Him who gave you the means and the capacity for enjoyment. If nature is clad for your vision in livery so rich, and garnished with beauty so fresh and radiant, tell me, dear youth, whose "handiwork" is exhibited there? All that is curious, and all that is grand, from the pebble that glistens on the beach to the glorious orbs that wheel and shine in the vaulted skies, all are the

works of Him who gave you an eye to see and a soul to enjoy. You must "look through nature up to nature's God." You must not rest satisfied with the pleasure which God's works afford. If you do, you will never know the calm, ennobling delight which they experience, who, to the gratifications of taste, add the sublimer pleasures of religion. You must also remember, that a mind which can sympathize with objects so glorious as the works of the Creator, and feel the pantings of desire for more enjoyment, must have a nature that is immortal, and must find, after all, its fullest satisfaction in God.

"Give what thou wilt, without thee we are poor;
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away."

LETTER V.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SOCIAL PRINCIPLE ON
YOUTHFUL HAPPINESS.

A YOUNG person is not only susceptible of high gratification from the objects which court his opening faculties, but he also derives another spring of happiness from the development of his social affections.

Allied to the love of nature is the flow of affection for animated and intelligent beings. There is a mysterious link that binds us to each other, and heart answers to heart like the return of an echo. This pleasing, pensive, anxious feeling steals insensibly upon the soul, and before we are aware of its existence, betrays itself to others in the mantling blush.

In subsequent life, and after experiencing the cold and selfish indifference with which our generous sympathies are sometimes received, we naturally collect our dispersed affections, that they may repose principally on our kindred and friends. But a youth is generous and confiding. He mingles feelings without suspicion, and is ready to believe all sincere who proffer him their friendship. The collisions and jealousies of manhood have not yet been experienced, and there is a real heartfelt satisfaction in early intimacies. Alas, like his other

enjoyments, they are soon interrupted, and a few years evince that souls which appeared almost to have blended into one, have scarcely the recollection of their mingled and reciprocal delights. If, through that mercy which often overtakes us in our pilgrimage to eternity, those hearts, that were early united become sanctified for a nobler existence, the joyous recognition in another world shall increase the happiness with which that world abounds.

Besides this susceptibility, there is, as already hinted, seated still deeper in the heart a strange and restless emotion, which pants for a closer alliance of the soul than is felt or found in friendship. It was planted there by Him who framed our being, and who has made it the source of a felicity which, if it does not remove, at least mitigates the woes of our fallen state. We should never make a heaven of our temporal enjoyments; but that religion which teaches us to "crucify our affections," commands us to "love one another," and commends the union of hearts as "honorable in all."

It is surely a theme of grateful praise, that amid the trials of life there can be one who shares and alleviates our burdens and enhances every joy. Youth is susceptible, in a high degree, of this generous emotion. It is not *always*, however, a source of happiness. It sometimes becomes the aliment of misery and death. It has lain in the heart an

unrequited offering, and instead of giving pleasure, it has, like a wasting fire, consumed its victim. These effects are generally observable only where there exists an unlawful or indiscreet attachment. Like many other feelings of our nature, this was given to heighten and not to diminish our earthly felicity. Like other feelings, it must be kept within the limits that God has assigned ; it must be exercised under circumstances which discretion will justify ; it must be a reasonable and not a reckless passion.

I abhor the cold, calculating heart that measures its personal interest in another by the amount of money possessed, or the number of acres inherited ; and equally detest the inconsiderate frantic rush of passion, that is blind to considerations of duty and parental advice.

A check must be given to this emotion of the heart, while immature years are passed in the acquisition of knowledge, or employed in preparation for some useful station in society. The young affections should be restrained until the period arrives when it will be honorable and safe to unfetter them. For want of such restraint, many a youth has dashed his earthly hopes and dragged out a miserable existence. There are, in the recollection of all, living examples of such heedless, infatuated persons.

It is not to be denied, that when circumstances justify it, a reciprocal affection between the sexes,

founded on virtuous and honorable principles, is one of the purest sources of earthly happiness. It seems as if the Creator, in pronouncing upon the sinning pair the curses which their disobedience so justly merited, left to them, in pity for their calamities, this soothing, mitigating blessing. Yet this blessing should be cherished with a recollection of its instability: The strongest earthly ties may quickly be broken, and the sweetest pleasures seem like blossoms born for the blast. It is this fleeting, evanescent character, attaching to every object beneath the sun, which spreads over the brightest a pensive beauty. The thought how soon they must pass away will often steal upon our unwilling minds, and check the admiration with which we contemplate them.

Although earthly scenes must vanish, and the most exuberant delights be relinquished, yet there is a state that is permanent, and there are pleasures that never end. Yes, even on earth you may have the incipient taste of this unfading bliss. If you "set your affections on things above," you shall not be disappointed in the objects of your choice. There, all is young, bright, and enduring. Not a hue of that scene shall ever fade, nor a feature grow old. Cease then to seek your highest happiness in this world, for in the comparison,

"All on earth is shadow, all beyond
Is substance; the reverse is folly's creed."

LETTER VI.

FEWER SUBJECTS OF SELF-REPROACH IN YOUTH.

AMONG the pleasures of youth, there is one of a negative character worthy of consideration—a comparative freedom from self-reproach. I speak now of those whose morals are uncorrupted, and whose general habits are commendable.

I would not insinuate that any young person is free from guilt, or, in the pure eye of heaven, worthy or acceptable. That record which cannot err has taught us that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one." But youthful character may be viewed comparatively. We may consider it moral, as opposed to the dissolute; we may regard it lovely, as opposed to the refractory; we may speak of it as uncorrupt, in opposition to the artful and intriguing. In this view there are certainly fewer subjects of self-reproach in youth than in subsequent life.

"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities but a wounded spirit who can bear?" This maxim of inspired wisdom is applicable to all; and the interrogatory with which it concludes, implies that the misery of self-reproach is of the most oppressive and pungent character. There is nothing that so

disrobes the soul of its grandeur, and crushes its lofty aspirations. "The arrows that drink up the spirit," are those of self-reproach; and the wounds which they inflict, like the poisoned darts of the ancients, are curable only by a medicine that is divine. To carry in the bosom this corroding companion of guilt; to go with it to pleasures which cannot please, and to scenes of beauty which we affect to admire; to feel it mock the eye, and contradict the tongue, when eye and tongue are apparently eloquent with praise, Oh, this is too much for mortal man to bear.

Much which passes for pleasure, and motions which seem to signify delight, are often deceitful. Like those visions that mock the eye of the mariner, they prove but illusions, which, upon a nearer inspection, vanish into air. So hollow, and so hypocritical often, is the pretended happiness of many who are the victims of self-reproach.

It cannot be denied that He who formed the soul put within it a faculty which, like a sentinel, gives the alarm at the approach of danger. He who heeds not this monitor, and voluntarily opens the portals of the soul to unlawful desire, must purchase his indulgence or his gain by sacrificing the calm pleasures of an approving conscience.

But how often is it done. What multitudes make the sacrifice; and when they have made it, they find too late that they have passed the prohibited

limit which has excluded them for ever from the early paradise of their joys. They can never retrace their steps, nor regain that serenity of mind which had previously marked their youth. They have but one hope remaining. It is the hope which boundless mercy holds out to the despairing eye. If they embrace it, peace may again be restored to the bosom, and self-reproach may become the instrument of humility and contrition.

This uneasy load which so oppresses the hearts of most men, may be traced to three sources: privileges and opportunities lost, duties omitted, and the commission of positive sin.

As we advance in life, it is natural to look back upon the past, but the view is not always one on which the heart delights to dwell. There is here and there a green spot in our retrospective glance, but the majority of men must heave a sigh over favorable opportunities lost, and precious privileges misimproved. Many must be covered with shame at the recollection, that the period when the yielding soul might have taken an impress which would have placed them in an honorable and useful station, was whiled away in idleness and in ignorance. So often as the delinquency recurs, and recur it will again and again, we experience anew the misery of disappointment and remorse.

The review of privileges neglected and opportunities lost raises an inward regret, but does not

perhaps contain so much that is painful and pungent as the recollection of duties omitted.

It is the nature of man to grow better or worse. He cannot be stationary. His habits of feeling and of action are daily gaining strength. If their tendency is good, he "is growing in grace;" but if evil, he is becoming "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Of course that religious duty which might once have been performed with comparative facility, becomes, in after-life, almost impracticable. The disposition and ability to perform it decrease inversely as the years of carelessness and neglect increase. This is felt in many a bosom that retraces its early being with a melancholy self-reproach for having omitted duties which have lost none of their claims by long neglect.

I have known many a man whose confessions on this point have agitated his frame, and told of the stormy conflict within. I have heard him sigh out his regret, and speak of such omissions with a melancholy tone, which seemed prophetic of the hopelessness of his case. But if, with misimproved privileges and omitted duties, he have led a life of dissipation, there is added to the load, already too oppressive, an incumbent mass of anguish, which weighs down the soul and makes it at times almost wish for annihilation. Oh, the pangs of remorse; how excruciating, even in this world! and if these

pangs be but the commencement of what shall be increased and perpetuated in another state of existence, what heart thus stung with guilt can be indifferent to the calls of that Redeemer, who came into the world to save the chief of sinners, and wash away the foulest stains?

LETTER VII.

THE SEASON OF YOUTH NOT ONE OF INNOCENCE.

THE sentiments advanced in the preceding letter are not intended to imply that youth is a period of innocence; especially would I not leave the impression, that a person of either sex who has arrived at the confines of mature life, has no grounds for self-reproach.

In the case of the idler and the profligate, there may be, and there frequently is, a deep and constant and soul-harrowing remorse. Even the youth who maintains an honorable freedom from such vices, is not exempted from self-reproach. He should be as stainless as a seraph to claim such indemnity. If his mind has been at all enlightened on the matter of obligation, or his eye have been even superficially fixed on the passing emotions of his heart, he will see little in himself to approve, and much to condemn. He must know, and he *does* know, that not a day passes in which there is freedom from sin; and not an action is performed that could bear the scrutiny of heaven.

If, through the restraints which a merciful Providence has bound around his soul, he is deterred from those gross vices which ruin character and blight future prospects, he should be thankful to

Him who has thus far restrained him. But such restraints do not always imply freedom from self-reproach. There may be other points on which conscience is loud in her upbraidings—secret sins, that become the more aggravated as the obligations to avoid them are better known.

Hence, I cannot admit that any are free entirely from just self-reproach.

If, my young reader, you will be honest in the development of your feelings, you will bear me witness, that whatever topics of self-complacency you may gather from your character and conduct, you cannot, on a review of your thoughts and actions, escape the feelings of self-condemnation. There are hours in your experience when the recoil of thought makes you uneasy and unhappy. There are omissions of duty for which the conscience will upbraid. Yes, you must admit that the standard of action which has been given from above is too pure for your feelings, and claims too much for your justification.

While this is conceded, we may speak of a comparative freedom from self-reproach. We may show that as life recedes, it leaves behind a more innocent portion of our existence. The hope of salvation in a future world we indeed ground on no merit of man, no comparative innocence of youth; we fix it alone on the atonement made by Him who died. "the just for the unjust." But if you speak of

present happiness or misery, founded on many or few subjects of self-reproach, we cannot deny that youth possesses more of such happiness and less of such misery, than can be claimed by him who has travelled into the vale of life.

It will be recollected that I am speaking of man, independent of the influences of religion. I am supposing that in neither case its consolations are known. Bearing this in mind, I ask, if the man who has seen the lapse of many years, and grown wrinkled by care, does not look back upon the period of youth as furnishing fewer subjects of self-condemnation than that to which he has arrived? Does not the thought force the involuntary sigh?

At every step of our progress through life, we have new duties to perform, new mercies to acknowledge, and new temptations to resist. If duties as they rise are neglected; if mercies as they fall are received with ingratitude; if temptations as they assail are not resisted, then, the further we advance in our course, the deeper is our guilt, and the deeper should be our self-reproach. The hoary head, instead of a crown of glory, is then the badge of infamy, and the stings of remorse remain after the power of sinful enjoyment is gone.

Few men of mature age can feel that they have done their duty. All must acknowledge that they have much ground for self-reproach. The youth may upbraid himself for want of filial affection and

respect, or for disobedience to parental authority ; but in addition to this, his seniors have often to reflect with bitter anguish on the neglected morals of their offspring. The youth may feel conscience-smitten for the neglect of the higher duties which he owes to Him who gave him being ; but at the same time, he encourages himself, though improperly, with the vain hope that soon he will give full obedience to such obligations. The man of years has not only the oppressive thought that he has lived long in such guilty neglect, but the overwhelming consideration, that having bid adieu to the tenderness of youth, there is little hope left of ever entering the paths of religion. The youth, needing the care of others rather than having dependents of his own, has less responsibility, and of course violates fewer social obligations ; but he around whom Providence has gathered a numerous train of dependents, has often the harrowing reflection, that perhaps their future misery may be traced to his neglect. A son may have been lost by indulgence, or a daughter's immortal hopes been blasted by parental fondness. His servants, for want of discipline, may be ruined under his eye. The scene of domestic troubles which he is obliged to endure, the reverse of what his youthful fancy had sketched, is but another proof that we are often disappointed in the visions of our early years. The countenance of many an unfaithful parent has been

clothed with sadness by the wreck of one whose infancy gave delight, and whose boyhood was full of promise. Oh, how many a pang of self-reproach has been inflicted on the parent's heart.

When, therefore, we consider the numerous causes of remorse which mark our more mature existence, we must concede to the period of youth much enjoyment ; or rather, we must allow it the absence of no small portion of misery.

After all, my young friend, you have no ground of boasting. You have obligations which are violated, and duties which have not been discharged. Great as is your enjoyment, and numerous as are your pleasures, you have within you that which speaks of guilt, and forebodings which a career of earthly pleasure cannot remove. Let me, then, advise you to make an early surrender of yourself to Him who can by his mercy pardon, and by his Spirit purify your soul—who can chase away your fears and remove your apprehensions, by showing to faith the pledge of forgiveness and the prospect of a sinless and happy existence.

LETTER VIII.

THE STRENGTH OF YOUTHFUL ANTICIPATIONS.

It has often been a subject of speculation and discussion, whether more felicity is derived from anticipation, than from the possession of the thing anticipated. I may in passing glance at this point, though it is not my intention to give it a protracted consideration.

There is a distinction between hope and anticipation. The former always refers to that which is desirable; the latter may respect that which is dreaded as well as that which is desired. Hope, if expressive of less confidence, contains more stability; and if it clings to a less probability, lifts the soul sooner from the pressure of disappointment. It is a tenacious principle, sustaining the spirits when all is dark, and attending the most wretched with its glimmering light, even to the grave. Hence, you find it symbolized by an anchor supporting a female form. How appropriate the symbol! She whose slender texture and delicate feelings expose her to sickness on the one hand, and a wounded or broken heart on the other—she who, although suffering the greater proportion of life's trials, seems less adequate to endure them—surely

she needs, in its fullest vigor, the encouraging, counteracting influence of hope.

Hope looks forward perhaps more frequently to the alleviation of suffering, than to greater happiness in reserve. It may, therefore, be proper to speak of the pleasures of youth as connected with anticipation rather than hope.

If, in life's pilgrimage, there be a spot upon which the sunshine falls most sweetly, the flowers breathe out their richest fragrance, and the vista opens enchantingly to the eye, that spot is embraced in the anticipations of youth. You may sigh, and say those anticipations will never be realized. Ere the sun reaches its meridian the flowers and the vista will fade, and the scene vanish like the visions of romance. Suppose it should, it is still a vision which we would fain recall—a deception to which we would again gladly submit. I mourn as much as any that the scene should be sketched in colors so fleeting. I would counsel thee, young aspirant, to dip thy pencil in "living light," and bring thy anticipations to bear upon a paradise where the waters are "clear as crystal"—where the fragrance is immortal—where even the leaves afford a healing balm for our sorrows. I would have thee strive for the "crown of glory" that shall never tarnish. I would lift thine eye above the wealth that wearies its possessor, to the treasures which are "laid up in heaven;" and instead of picturing to your imagina-

tion the full flow of domestic delights, I would send your thoughts to that assembly of blessed spirits, who "are as the angels of God."

But we cannot deny, that even in the anticipations which respect *this* world, there is delight. We would not call them the foolish vagaries of a youthful brain, nor pronounce them entirely visionary. You *may* realize the scenes which your glowing imagination has sketched, but ~~you may~~ not find in them all the pleasure with which you had supposed them fraught. You may possess the objects, but you will be disappointed in the measure of enjoyment.

There is no honorable occupation in life which yields not to him who lawfully pursues it, a reasonable reward; nor any elevated station, especially if attained by merit and industry, which affords not a fruition that should satisfy our expectations.

The difficulty is, that our expectations of earthly enjoyment are exorbitant and unwise. It was never intended by Him who planted these young desires in the heart, that they should terminate on earth. It was never meant that the youthful imagination should place its scenes of highest delight beneath the sun. These discursive feelings were designed to reach a higher sphere, and dwell in a sublimer region. If we overlook the end of our being, and rest our affections on earth alone, we ought to expect that satiety and disappointment will ensue.

The soul of man finds, in sublunary things, a sphere too circumscribed for its movements, a provision too tasteless for its cravings. We must not blame the pleasures of the world for not yielding all the fruition we expected. If we have made them the object of our most ardent desires, they will make us feel that in them supreme happiness is not to be found.

You now enjoy, probably, as much gratification in your anticipations as you would ever realize, were you to obtain the objects you desire. If your expectations are extravagant; if you forget the incapacity of earthly enjoyments to meet the demands of an immortal mind; if you grasp solely the objects of time, depend upon it you will be disappointed. Survey with a judicious eye the opening scenes of life, and admit into your calculations of happiness the many possibilities of miscarriage, and then your disappointments, though they may cloud your prospects for a while, will not overwhelm and prostrate your mental energies. The soul will often rise from the pressure with renovated strength; and having learned by hard experience how liable sanguine hopes are to be overthrown, will recommence its course with moderated expectations and desires.

There is every thing to stimulate a youthful mind. "The world is all before him." Its honors, its pleasures, fame with her trumpet tongue, and

wealth with her varied delights, speak in his ear and beam on his eye, until, by the power of fancy, he almost sees them his, and by the force of anticipation, almost tastes their joys. O that he could see their comparative emptiness, measure them by the light of eternity, and nobly rising above the influence of their attractive power, seek "those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God!"

LETTER IX.

THE ANTICIPATIONS OF THE YOUNG RESPECT A
VARIETY OF OBJECTS.

THE objects of youthful anticipation generally vary, according to the character and circumstances of the individual. One born in high life, and from his infancy surrounded by the pageantry of wealth, would of course look forward with more elevated expectations, than the lowly offspring of poverty. The latter seldom ventures further than to cast a wishful eye to those stations of opulence and of power, which seem not to have been destined for him.

There is occasionally a noble exception. Lofty aspirations sometimes take possession of a soul which received its being in obscurity, and felt its first dawning hopes amid the embarrassments of poverty. Such a spirit spurns the impediments which surround it; and like the cloudy morning, whose vapors roll away from the face of the rising sun, shines the brighter because of its early obscurity.

While examples of such successful emulation are in our remembrance, we cannot doubt that many an indigent youth, although fraught with all the feverish excitement of hope, and endued with the

elements of intellectual greatness, has sunk beneath his discouragements, and wasted his powers in some menial employment.

“ Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
 The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear ;
 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

But happily for the world, a gracious Providence has suited the feelings of his creatures to the situation in which he has seen fit to place them ; and generally the anticipations of an indigent youth bear a proportion to the circumstances which surround him. If he ventures not to lift the eye of expectation to the proud eminence of affluence and of power, he finds equal pleasure in anticipating a humbler allotment. Seldom does the heart of one who has been early schooled by adversity, whose young desires have grown up on the sterile soil of poverty, look with envy on the favorites of mammon or the successful votaries of fame. To him, it is generally enough that some neat and humble dwelling which he may call his own, and a few acres which shall yield to unceasing industry a pittance over his necessary supplies, may crown in manhood the hopes of his youth. Then the opulent may roll by in splendor, or fame's loud trumpet resound her favorite's name ; he can see and hear these demonstrations of greatness with little of envy or desire.

There may be exceptions to this description. There are some who identify exterior grandeur with the certain existence of haughtiness and disdain. In such cases, self-love and pride, which are natural even to the poorest, will lead them to detract from the character and condition of their superiors.

There are indeed countries where the nature of the government restricts the young desires, and where the loftiest genius must fold its pinions in despair. But it is your privilege to live where industry may thrive without impediment, and genius, instead of being imprisoned, may attain the eminence it deserves. If you appreciate your circumstances, and under God's blessing make the most of them, there is no hinderance to your advancement.

It is natural, as I have observed, to shape our anticipations according to the circumstances of our early life. That parent who has passed through the several grades of distinction which his country can bestow, naturally seeks the same distinctions for his offspring, and almost invariably encourages him to anticipate them. Under these circumstances, we should of course suppose that the early bias of youthful desires would be directed to worldly honor and greatness. His education is commenced with this view. Every thing is done to wake in his mind the aspirings of ambition; and start him early in the race for earthly glory.

I shall not affirm that all such stimulating meas-

ures for exciting the mind are entirely unjustifiable. It shall be my object, in these letters, to regard man as he is, and endeavor to impress him with just views, and inculcate proper principles. Whether emulation be a proper incentive to present to the young mind, I shall not here undertake to say. But I cannot justify that parent or instructor who makes it the only motive to exertion. I would at least insist upon its being his duty to inculcate, as paramount, the pure principles of religion.

These remarks will apply with equal pertinency to those who regard wealth as a great and important object of pursuit.

In this country, which at the present time may, without any gross insult to its inhabitants, be termed a money-making country, there are more youth who are stimulated by the love of gain than the desire of honor or promotion. Competency, if not affluence, is within the reach of many young men. Accordingly, it appears to be an object with many, who by long and patient exertion have accumulated wealth, to stimulate their sons in the same career. It does not occur to them that possibly such pursuits may end in a fixed habit of avarice, and that the young aspirant, having gained the world, may eventually lose his soul. Money is an object of strong attraction. He who finds his highest happiness in counting and recounting his treasures, will be likely to begin early to introduce the

same craving desires into the minds of his offspring. The youth will be drilled in the arts of traffic. The associations of business and the chances of bargaining will regularly court his attention, and a great fortune will be represented as the ground of respectability and the source of influence. Under such a training, what wonder that in the mind of youth all other considerations but the simple one of acquiring wealth, should be forgotten and obliterated.

But there are other considerations; and high as your hopes may rise, and bright as may be your anticipations of lucre or renown, there are subjects of still *higher* import, objects which should more strongly attract the soul. Even were the earthly object obtained, were the thing coveted so eagerly secured, how soon must you relinquish it: "for we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." O aspire to undecaying joys; pant for eternal honors; use the world, but do not abuse it; for "the fashion thereof passeth away."

LETTER X.

CONSIDERATION OF WEALTH AS AN OBJECT OF
YOUTHFUL DESIRE.

To the youthful aspirant, whose anticipations are glowing with the prospect of wealth, I have additional remarks to offer. I do not approach you with a stern demeanor, as if intending harshly to upbraid you; nor with the moroseness of one who has himself felt the passion you feel, and found his hopes disappointed. I am neither magisterial nor misanthropic. I have not strongly desired riches, nor have I, of course, been disappointed in their pursuit. I am not one who thinks lightly of wealth when viewed in relation to this life; nor am I of that number who, unblessed with it, decry it in the possession of another. I would not take from the sons of Cræsus their bed of down and place under them a pallet of straw, nor disrobe their edifices of beauty and send them to inhabit a hovel.

Even luxury, viewed in some respects, is useful. But you should remember, that too often the person reposing in luxury perverts the gifts of Providence, and makes it less impossible that a camel should go through a needle's eye, than that his pampered and polluted soul should enter the kingdom of heaven. It is not because he is rich that we censure him, but

because his riches are abused, and thus made the means of his ruin. It is not his large establishment that we condemn, but his making it the object of his supreme delight.

Riches are the gift of God. It is heaven's blessing that makes exertion in any lawful pursuit successful; and it is heaven's appointment when property, accumulated through the exertions of a parent, descends by inheritance to his offspring. The evil does not lie in the riches, but in him who perverts them.

I do not believe that wealth contributes nothing to our felicity. It does not indeed add to it when sought with unhallowed motives, secured by dishonorable means, or spent in riotous living. It does not, when it produces a penurious and miserly habit: then, indeed, it will prove the "gold that shall canker," and the "rust that shall eat our flesh." Yet, who can deny that property obtained by honorable means or patient industry, contributes to the enjoyment of its possessor? Who will say that, when sought as the means of usefulness and appropriated to objects of charity, or employed as incitements to religious or literary improvement, it conveys no satisfaction to the soul? The great mistake lies in the wrong motives with which it is acquired, and the improper uses to which it is applied.

You doubtless aspire to the possession of riches,

especially if you are placed by Providence in circumstances to warrant the expectation of obtaining them. In analyzing your feelings on this subject, do you find that you desire wealth for its own sake? Are your efforts prompted by the mere love of money? Do you follow the pursuit of riches as the supreme and all-absorbing business of the soul? Does it occupy your waking thoughts and your midnight dreams? Has it taken such a hold upon the inner man as to crowd out and crush down every subject which relates to your immortal destiny? Are your anticipations clinging to lucre and to the pleasures which it will purchase? Do you view it or them as the greatest good? If so, you are not only a candidate for disappointment in the possession, but you will be criminal, deeply, dreadfully criminal, in the pursuit.

Riches, sought as the highest good, will not, cannot satisfy the soul. He whose inspiration gave it understanding, who intended it for higher pursuits and a nobler portion, will not permit it. The very possession of wealth would, under such circumstances, become a punishment. If you will make to yourself a golden idol, Jehovah may leave you to be for ever joined to it. You may cry to it in your affliction, but it will have no ears to hear. You may call upon it in your dying hour, but it will have no power to commiserate. You may invoke its aid, but it will put forth no hand to rescue.

It is highly important that you should learn to moderate your expectations of worldly prosperity. I do not wish you to become inactive in business; or indifferent to the increase of your possessions; but I exhort you to look upon wealth as less, infinitely less desirable than the inheritance which is "laid up in heaven." View it as the means of rational enjoyment and extensive usefulness; and while you are "diligent in business," be also "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

If your parents or guardians have inculcated a different course, if they have sent you on the mere pursuit of this world's treasures, let me entreat you to pause and inquire whether the course they have marked out is correct, and the motives they have presented such as God approves. Let me beseech you to examine the principles which govern you, and to estimate the wealth of this world by the bright rewards of another. I would direct you to that book where just calculations are made, and where you will find a scale in which you may weigh the happiness of the world with the hopes and prospects of heaven.

You know, young man, that youth must soon be succeeded by old-age. You know that the anticipations of youth must soon be followed by satiety, and at last by incapacity to enjoy. You know, too, that old-age is almost coincident with death. From that point look at the world! Suppose you

should have gained a large share of its treasures, must they not then terminate for ever? And if, after death, there be no enjoyments of sense, if then all will be spirit, and spirit have no better portion than that gathered from the treasures and delights of earth, what will be your eternity? where will be your soul?

LETTER XI.

HONOR AS AN OBJECT OF YOUTHFUL DESIRE.

WEALTH not only adds to the influence of its possessor, but gives him the means of gratification. In a country like ours, where property is sought with so much avidity, and secures to an individual so many advantages, it is not a matter of astonishment that many embark with high hopes of future opulence.

We are aware that the desire of wealth increases with the acquisition, and that the amount of property upon which the eye at first rested as the ultimate boundary of hope, becomes, when attained, but the starting point of another and more eager pursuit. So craving and yet so unsatisfied is the votary of mammon.

The reputation of learning and political stations, requiring more talent in the pursuit and holding out less probability of success, engage the attention and waken the anticipations of comparatively few. Still, there is a large class of young men who, from the favorable opportunities which mark the period of their minority, or from a superior force of mind acting against the impediments which embarrass them, fix their restless desires on the loftier pinna-

cles of earthly glory. The thirst for distinction, in its earliest development, appears in the domineering spirit of boyhood, which will act in no capacity but that of a leader in childish sports. It must venture one step further on the precipice than any of its compeers. It must hurl the stone one foot beyond the point which the efforts of its young antagonist has reached. It must even by its acknowledged prowess enforce submission, as the little tyrant whose will gives the law and whose arm administers punishment to the disobedient. The same indomitable spirit looks out upon life's scenes, and pants to supplant those in power, and to usurp if possible the dominion of the world. With this motive, acting like a lever to the mind's energies, the ambitious will toil in the study, breast themselves to danger in the field, and travel among polar snows or scorching deserts. If they cannot reach the sceptre, they will bound their views only by the regions of possibility. They may not at first have suspected the ultimate strength of this passion. As circumstances develope, as in their ascent to fame one impediment after another gives way before their untiring and restless struggles, they begin to find that ambition knows no limit and acknowledges no superior.

It is this principle that often seats the student at the midnight lamp, that sustains the soldier amid the stormy conflict, and animates the statesman in

the hall of debate. It is this which infuses energy into the mind, and gives eloquence to the tongue. It is, however, a hypocritical principle. It often calls itself patriotism, when it is nothing but the desire of office. It often claims the character of benevolence, when it deserves only that of pride. It frequently passes for disinterestedness, when it should be denominated supreme selfishness. Still, it is a principle which, by the control of Him who brings good out of evil, operates very often to the advantage of society, and, in the absence of a nobler motive, becomes a spring to industry and a promoter of the public good.

I do not pass sentence upon all who are engaged in the pursuit of honor. I would not attribute to my distinguished fellow-citizens universally, the grovelling motive of personal ambition. I believe that a loftier principle beats in many a heart, and that the name of patriot is not an empty sound. I will not admit that to ambition *alone* we are indebted for the books of science which adorn our libraries, for the temple of freedom which graces our land, or the principles of liberty which breathe in our constitution. There is more than one name hallowed in our recollections, upon which suspicion cannot fall.

Do not understand me as wishing to undervalue the pursuits of honorable distinction. I would only give to your enthusiasm a right direction, and bid

you go forward with expectations that may not be disappointed, and with motives which shall make your success doubly delightful. It is natural that you should wish to become honored and respected. I cannot suppose you indifferent to reputation. But let not your expectations be immoderate. There are, and I would urge you to remember it, rewards and distinctions which far outweigh the brightest honors of earth. Be not then so absorbed in the pursuit of fame as to overlook "the honor which cometh from God." The one is in its very nature unsatisfying; the other calms and elevates the soul. The one must be relinquished almost as soon as obtained; the other follows its possessor beyond the limits of time, and grows brighter and more blissful as the ages of eternity revolve. If you disregard the honor that cometh from God, and become absorbed in that which ambition proffers, you "put darkness for light, and light for darkness." You make an estimate of things calculated to deceive you on earth and ruin you for ever.

While earthly renown is not to be despised when it may be irreproachably sought and obtained, it will, as you must admit, soon pass away. The chaplet has scarcely touched the temples ere it is exchanged for the habiliments of the grave. While the shout of acclamation rings on the ear of the successful candidate for civil promotion, and swells

his exulting heart, that ear becomes insensible, and that heart ceases to beat.

O that you would fix your aim upon a higher, an imperishable reward. Be persuaded to estimate the things of earth by that record which has written "vanity of vanities" upon her brightest treasures.

LETTER XII

A FRIENDLY WARNING FOUNDED ON THE INEXPERIENCE OF THE YOUNG.

I HAVE thus far considered the pleasures and anticipations which characterize the period of youth. To these pleasures I have conceded as much of personal gratification as the most enthusiastic and sanguine could be warranted in claiming. It may indeed be thought by many that I have given them too great an importance in the scale of earthly bliss. You will bear in mind, however, that I have all along considered them as the probable sources of disappointment, and have warned you, that if not wisely controlled, they may lead not only to the wreck of earthly hopes, but the utter ruin of the soul.

Some writers, in addressing the young, especially when they belong to a class of men whose profession creates an instinctive awe, may appear to have approached them in an austere, if not a harsh and repulsive manner. The youth, not careful to discriminate, supposes that his admonisher would strip him of every enjoyment, and send him, like an anchorite, to subdue his natural sensibilities, and to assume, while in youth, the coldness and gravity of

age. But this is not his intention. He only wishes to set you right in the calculations you are making of earthly happiness, and to lift your immortal mind to those superior pleasures which can never satiate. If the mode of our address be occasionally pungent, you must refer the point and the earnestness to the interest which we feel in your happiness, and to the perception which we have of your danger. You must not call us harsh when we are only ardent; nor consider as cruelty to your feelings what duty to our God and desire for your salvation impel us to say.

Certainly, young men, you will thus far acquit me of smothering youthful feelings; of driving you to premature sobriety; of crushing every flower that blooms in your early pilgrimage. You cannot accuse me of having grown grey myself, and of being therefore desirous to sprinkle upon your heads the frosts which whiten my own. You cannot impute to me feelings which have become cold, and which would therefore reduce your enthusiasm to my own indifference and apathy. No; I come to you in these letters as one of your own number. I can appreciate your feelings, and participate with as keen a relish as ever in many of your joys. Some experience I may have had beyond yourselves. That experience has taught me to regard you with an interest arising from identity of hopes, prospects, and enjoyments.

He certainly is a friendly traveller who, having anticipated others a short distance of the road, turns back to apprise his companions of dangers to which they will be exposed; and those, to say the least, have an ungrateful heart, who receive the warning with suspicion or indifference.

There are dangers to which you are exposed; and they are not less real because the apprehension of them disturbs not your bosom. The greatest perils are often concealed. The most fatal shipwrecks occur from sunken rocks and unobserved quicksands. The day that is ushered in by the singing of birds and the playing of zephyrs, may terminate in the gloomy and desolating tempest.

We have hitherto been considering the period of youth as fraught with high hopes and happy feelings. We have sketched some of its anticipated delights, but were we not to annex the dangers and temptations to which it is exposed, we should exhibit in our picture a partiality unnatural and unwarrantable. In every earthly prospect, dark and light shades succeed or are intermingled. The path through life is not without its precipices; and he who faithfully points out our exposure, bestows upon us a greater kindness than he who only dwells on the safe and agreeable portions of the journey. It has, I am aware, been often asked, Why apprise the youth that he must meet with disappointment? Why teach him to prepare for the hour of trial?

Why compel him to suffer before the occasions of suffering occur? Such, however it may sound to the unreflecting, is not the language of an honest and enlightened judgment. As well may you say to the unwary mariner, unfurl your sails and fly before the wind, when his very fleetness will impel him the more swiftly into the threatening breakers. As well refuse to erect the beacon, because by its gloomy light it indicates the rock-bound coast on which it shines. As well bid the bird fly and sing more merrily, because every flash of its wing brings it nearer to the fowler's snare. Oh, it is cruel thus to deceive. Instead of benevolence, it is a blind and withering charity, that destroys by its mistaken kindness.

I would therefore draw upon the chart of life the requisite indications of danger, and bid you, as you proceed on your voyage, to observe them with a cautious eye. I would not, I cannot hold out to you the hope that all will be serene, that every wind which blows will be prosperous. No; the various aspects which mark the "deep blue sea," are a true resemblance of the fluctuating scenes of life. Now gentle breezes fan the surface; then the hurricane mingles ocean and sky in terrific fury. You ought to be apprized of similar vicissitudes, and prepared for similar dangers. If there is a possibility of avoiding the perils that lie along your course, you should surely wish to know it; and if the means of

safety are attainable, you should surely desire to employ them.

I shall then endeavor, in a few succeeding letters, to point out some of the temptations to which the young are exposed, and to show the mode by which they may be avoided, resisted, or overcome. This, although a less pleasing task than that already accomplished, is of equal, perhaps of greater importance. If it shall appear at that great day when the history of the universe shall be unfolded in eternity, that through those hints one immortal mind was guarded from temptation or drawn back from the brink of destruction—that any reckless youth may have been reclaimed, and a new direction given to feet that had begun to press onward in the broad road to death, I shall have the reward, the highest which I covet, of having “converted a sinner from the error of his ways, and saved a soul from death.”

DANGERS AND TEMPTATIONS.

LETTER XI. I.

SUSCEPTIBILITY OF THE YOUTHFUL FEELINGS THE
OCCASION OF TEMPTATION.

THAT very susceptibility to earthly enjoyment which so strongly marks the period of youth, exposes the heart to the power of temptation. In youth, the feelings predominate over the judgment. Unapprized of danger, and delighted with the objects that everywhere court his eye, the young man is exposed to the insidious reptile that lies coiled in concealment, and sees not the lure that is spread for his destruction. He is alive to every new impression, and throws open his arms with unsuspecting confidence to every plausible companion.

While such youthful enthusiasm and generosity are worthy of admiration, they are also the groundwork upon which the practical enemies of his peace, whether invisible or embodied spirits, build their hope of seducing and destroying him. They know he is alive to pleasure, and they mingle their cup and spread their feast for his enjoyment. They are aware that he is unsuspecting, and with apparent generosity they proffer him their aid.

Many a youth, bright with hope and unsullied in character, has parted from the embrace of his parents to mingle in the busy scenes of life, and left at the paternal threshold all the happiness that he was ever to enjoy. The tear that fell on his cheek may have betrayed a mother's anxiety, but the self-confident youth has ascribed it to no apprehension of danger, because his own unsuspecting heart has felt no fear. But his very confidence becomes the occasion of his ruin. The insidious foe knows how to accommodate his young mind, and graduates the degrees of temptation to the advance which he has made, and the facility with which he has yielded himself up an unapprized, yet voluntary victim.

From pleasures which may be termed innocent, to those deeply criminal, there is an approximation which is not the less fatal because it is gradual and unperceived. There is a sort of shading off in this criminal process of seduction, that keeps the mind inattentive to its progress from comparative innocence to the dark and deepening colors of guilt. That which, if presented in the early stages of his career, would startle the young mind with horror, finds, after aggravated temptations have gradually weakened his moral powers, an unresisted and easy entrance to his heart. There will sometimes flash upon him a recollection of his former rectitude. An instinctive comparison between what he now is and what he once was, will, for a moment, take posses-

sion of his thoughts. The steps of his downward progress he may not discern, but the extremes will often strike the soul like the knell of departed happiness.

It is therefore evident that there is danger to a young man who, without the safeguard of a fixed religious character, plunges into the promiscuous scenes of life. The danger, generally, is not that he will at once abandon himself to sinful pleasures. This may, and often does take place. Where there has been no previous attention given to his morals, and no prayerful and assiduous efforts to fix in his mind the counteracting influence of religious principle, the youth makes rapid strides in guilt, and soon transcends the limit of decency and sobriety. There is, in such a one, scarcely the show of resistance to temptation. He capitulates at once.

Most parents feel, if on no other subject connected with religion, something at least of the pressure of parental obligation, and endeavor to guard their offspring from indolence and vice. Those who have the faith of the gospel feel this pressure in a peculiar and powerful degree. It will often start their tears and heave their anxious bosoms. They cannot fail to connect with the happiness of their children the exercise of the moral virtues, nor can they suppress fearful apprehension from their exposures to temptation.

If it has been the privilege of my reader to be

born of such parents, and educated under the instructions which they have felt it their duty to communicate, the obligations which bind you to a corresponding life are proportionable to the blessings you have enjoyed. Rid yourself of such obligations you never can. The restraints which this early tutelage may have imposed, you *can* throw off. The ligatures which parental tenderness and anxiety bound around you may be sundered, but the responsibilities that come from this early education will abide upon your soul for ever. If, as the scenes of life open upon you, the pleasures of sin steal away your thoughts and affections—if you take those steps that conduct to death, and turn into that broad road which leads to destruction, the memory of past privileges will give a pungency to the stings of conscience, and make your guilty career replete with tenfold criminality and misery. In your case the danger is, that there will be a gradual relaxation of that strict and unbending rule of conduct which has been enjoined upon you. You may feel uneasy under the restraint, and even be compelled to bear the taunts of those who, having never felt the same force of obligation, are disposed to ridicule all who have.

You are aware how strong in the young mind is the principle of curiosity, and in what exaggerated colors things are often delineated to the fancy, which in reality are tame and unsatisfying. This

force of imagination in reference to pleasures that have not been enjoyed, and scenes which have never been visited, is a powerful lever in the hands of the tempter. The young wish to see and know for themselves. Confident of their own power to resist temptation, they venture upon the brink; and, alas, they too often find that curiosity is the gateway to desire, that self-confidence is a broken reed, inadequate to their support.

“Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,
As to be hated, needs but to be seen;
But seen too oft, familiar with its face,
We first abhor, then pity, then embrace.”

Those who are already travelling in this fatal course, are anxious to secure companions whose concurrence in guilt may afford countenance and support. If the adage, that “misery loves company,” be ever true, it is emphatically so in the case of those who, having fallen under temptation, have parted with their virtue, and who appear never so happy as when they can blast the hopes of a parent by becoming accessory to the ruin of his offspring.

From this immoral band I warn you off. If you feel them gaining upon your affections, or gradually drawing you astray by their example, take a determined stand. Plant your feet on this side of their sensual domains, and die, rather than

be seduced by their machinations. As you value your peace in this world, and as you desire salvation beyond the tomb, I beseech you to proclaim eternal warfare with their principles and their habits

LETTER XIV.

VARIETY OF TEMPTATIONS TO WHICH YOUNG MEN
ARE EXPOSED.

It is desirable to consider, somewhat more in detail, the nature of those temptations which assail the youthful mind. When we speak of temptation, it is natural to connect with it the idea of gross and disgusting immoralities. The word, I am aware, is generally used in this sense ; but it is my design to consider it in a more enlarged view, that I may embrace a class of persons who claim a freedom from base and sensual appetites, but who are nevertheless the victims of ruinous temptation.

I have spoken of wealth and fame as the great absorbing objects of youthful anticipation. This thirst for gain, and this spirit of accumulating property, generally operate as a barrier against the gross vices to which the idle are addicted. Such is the constitution of the mind, that by having one ruling passion, it becomes comparatively indifferent to inferior impulses. Thus, when the desire of wealth or the thirst for honorable distinction takes full possession of a man, it often raises him above the influence of mere animal pleasures ; and I have known those who, by acquiring such a controlling

spirit, have been lifted from the degradation of the sensualist.

But are there no temptations connected with the pursuit of riches or the stirring strife of ambition? Those who are enlisted in such pursuits often look down with pity and disgust on the mere voluptuary, as if the sphere in which they moved were a guarantee against the influence of disreputable deeds. But those pursuits, honorable as we may concede them to be, are the occasions of temptation and sin, as real, if not as gross, as those of the sensualist.

I might first inquire, whether to make wealth the great object to which all our energies are devoted, be not an occasion of tempting us to ruin. In the affections and desires of the human soul, one object will predominate. That "no man can serve two masters," is as true when applied to earthly objects and pursuits, as when applied to the service of God and the world. You cannot be supremely devoted to the acquisition of wealth, and at the same time supremely enlisted in the race for honorable distinction. Nor can you be entirely absorbed with the love of fame, and equally devoted to the amassing of riches. You need not be told, that if two rival pursuits cannot claim an equal share of your attention, it is utterly impossible you should love your Creator supremely, and yet set your highest affections upon any terrestrial object.

The temptation which wealth and fame spread for your feet, is such, that compliance detracts not from your influence or acceptableness among your fellow-men. They regard you as following a lawful occupation, or pursuing an honorable career. They analyze not your motives; and if they did, they would often render a favorable verdict where a more discriminating Judge, he who holds the balances of the sanctuary, would pronounce you wanting. Still the temptation is a real one, and in the sight of Him who claims your supreme regard, compliance involves the soul in guilt, and subjects it to his eternal displeasure. I am now supposing that you render to every man his due, and that you live so as to receive the approbation of the community. I do not suppose you dishonest in your dealings or oppressive in your demands. I am not attributing to you envy at the success of a competitor, or a haughty domineering spirit while in the possession of power. You are considered merely as a worshipper of mammon, or a devotee of worldly elevation, rejecting the claims of your Creator upon your highest regard, and transferring your whole soul to wealth or to power.

You must acknowledge that there is something in the successful pursuit of these objects, calculated thus to seduce, absorb, and rivet the mind. Look at the man who experiences what are generally termed the reverses of fortune. If he has given his

highest regard to earthly grandeur ; if he has sought it in the pageantry of wealth, or at the post of honorable distinction ; and if he now finds his expectations suddenly blasted, what a vacuity marks his countenance, and what a desolation broods over his soul. He had fixed his hopes no higher than earth, and placed his affections on the distinctions which she holds out, and as those hopes are blighted there is nothing left but despair, and as the objects of his affection are gone, his mental energies are wasted in self-reproach. Here is an evidence that pursuits which under certain circumstances are lawful and honorable, may become the occasion of temptation and ruin.

There is no difference, in the effect upon the mind, between him who is successful and him who is disappointed. If both have made those pursuits the great end of their being, both have become involved in the same criminality, and the only difference is, that he who is unsuccessful has the misery of disappointment to give pungency to the goadings of conscience. The successful candidate for wealth or fame, having overlooked the more important interests of another world, finds a drawback upon his exultations, arising not only from numerous and vexatious cares, but from the consciousness of having set aside the claims of his Creator. The temptation was alike pressing in both cases, and upon both was alike irresistible. They sought an earthly

portion, and despised the heavenly inheritance. They preferred the service of the world to the service of God. They were strongly tempted to this by the impulse within and by objects without; and though no gross immoralities attach to their character, they fall under the condemnation of that law which enjoins upon us all supreme devotion to our Creator.

In the pursuit of wealth or fame, this one danger, and an insidious one it is, lies in your pathway and demands a cautious eye. Remember, that "no man can serve two masters;" no man, while loving the world supremely, can love God. "For if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Yield to temptation on this point, and you yield all. You do not, in the eye of the world, become disreputable; you do not lose the respect and confidence of society, but you forfeit the favor of God and the fruition of heaven.

LETTER XV.

AN EAGER PURSUIT OF WEALTH OR HONOR
DANGEROUS.

THAT sacred record which teaches us to be "fer-vent in spirit, serving the Lord," inculcates, in the same sentence, the duty of being "not slothful in business." The two can coexist, and they *must* coexist, or we fall into temptation. He who habitually neglects the claims of domestic duty, or the necessary avocations of life, and pleads as his apology an attention to the more important service of religion, as certainly subjects himself to the displeasure of heaven as the man who makes nothing of religion, and every thing of the world and its concerns.

In the preceding letter I have considered our liability to prefer the riches and the honors of this life. The young are especially exposed to this temptation. On every hand they see the sons of opulence, and here and there observe the successful candidates for fame. The former dwell in houses of lofty and elegant proportions, are attended by an obsequious train of menials, and receive that notice and respect which affluence, independent of the character of its possessor, almost invariably com-

mands. The latter, when seen at a distance, look like figures in a mist, and seem to possess a super human grandeur, while their heroic deeds or commanding eloquence furnish themes for universal panegyric. The enthusiastic mind of youth is wrought up to an extravagant excitement, and he burns to emulate these predecessors in the path of prosperity and glory. It occurs not to him that there is, or that there *can* be a better portion. He sees no evil in embarking in these pursuits with his whole soul. His strong susceptibilities and intense desires fasten upon them with an unyielding grasp, and an attempt to detach them is considered as the indication of envy or uncharitableness.

If what you suppose were true, if there really were no better portion than wealth with its pagantry, and honor with its laurels, I would not be one to call you off from them. No; I would myself engage as a competitor, and abandoning every other consideration, I would bend my energies in the race. I would, with the sole and simple motive of self-aggrandizement, pass my nights at the lamp, or expose my person on the field of battle. Nothing should be left undone to secure my fame, and no inducement operate to hinder my advancement.

I hold it to be the duty of young and old to secure the greatest good; and if there be none

greater than honor and riches, instead of impeding your progress, I would urge every consideration to impel you in the course. But is there no higher happiness, no sublimer pursuit? Is there nothing more substantial, satisfying, and permanent? You *know* there *is*. You know that "riches make to themselves wings;" and honor, in the language of one of the sweetest of poets, is often like "thorns about the bleeding brow." You also know the inevitable necessity of relinquishing them at death. It is neither in envy nor uncharitableness that I thus speak. Were there no danger, I would not sound the alarm. If you could pledge yourself that you would ever keep first in view the great end for which God created you, if you could pursue wealth with moderated desires, and aspire to distinction as affording a greater scope for usefulness, I would not arrest your attention by these unwelcome warnings: I would not thus speak of temptations. But if the grace of that gospel which graduates things according to their value, has not cleared your obstructed vision and enabled you to fix a proper estimate upon sublunary objects, you will not, you cannot give such a pledge. You want that faith which carries the eye beyond the boundary of time and fixes its eager gaze upon the glories of eternity; you want that hope which aspires to an enduring substance, and those irrepressible desires which take hold on heaven. All this you must

have before you can weigh the attractions of earth by an unerring balance—before you can pursue, with safety to your soul, the path of honor, or accumulate, without danger of idolatry, the wealth which you desire.

Even the Christian, he in whose soul dwells the restraining and counteracting influence of holy principle, is apprized of the danger to which we have alluded, and cautioned against loving the world or ardently craving its treasures. If in *his* case it be necessary, it certainly is not less so in yours. You are not free from the obligations he acknowledges, although you profess not the hopes he entertains. What religion commands him to do, she makes equally binding upon you. You will at least admit, that if it be necessary to caution him against the danger of suffering earthly objects to supplant those that are heavenly, to you the caution must be doubly needful. He brings into view the brighter world to which he aspires, that its superior glories may eclipse the splendors of this. *You* look to no brighter world, and desire no better portion. He habitually meditates on the brevity of time, and the fading nature of earthly joys; thus sobering his views of the present world by the recollection of his quick transition to the future. You think of the present as a permanent residence, and suppress every reflection upon your speedy passage to eternity.

If then the Christian, with all this to counteract the prevalence of worldly feeling, requires incessant watchfulness and deep-toned warnings, is it not morally certain that you, whose very nature rushes with impetuosity and without obstruction into worldly pursuits, are in danger of making them your portion, and fixing upon them your highest affections? O be wise. Cast your eye along a path so dangerous, and as you commit your feet to it, consign yourself to the protection of Him who can "guide you by his counsel, and afterwards receive you to glory."

LETTER XVI.

THE TEMPTATION TO DISHONESTY CONSIDERED.

THE danger of making wealth or honor the highest object of attraction, and of excluding the more important interests of another world, we have briefly considered. We have spoken of the temptations to which, on these points, young men are peculiarly liable. But there are other evils connected with such pursuits which naturally present themselves to our view.

The temptation to dishonesty is often plausible and powerful. He whose ruling passion is the love of money, will be strongly impelled, especially if secrecy can be maintained, to embezzle or defraud. In the absence of religious principle, which condemns avarice and deters from fraudulent designs, a man who has the opportunity of being dishonest will sometimes be powerfully assailed by temptation. At times, and unhappily the cases are not of rare occurrence, he yields to the allurements, even in view of almost certain detection and disgrace.

Many a young man who had possessed the unlimited confidence of his employer, and for years justified that confidence by a scrupulous regard to his interests, has in an evil moment, either impelled by avarice or prompted by the love of pleasures

which he had not the means of obtaining, fallen under the power of the tempter. His character is then gone, and his hopes for this world are for ever blasted. He may fly on the wings of the wind to distant climes, and elude the pursuit of justice, though seldom is he successful in this; but he can never erase from his character the foul blot, nor remove from his conscience the intolerable load. The disgrace will follow him into countries the most remote. It will clothe every prospect with gloom, turn every pleasure into bitterness, and make the miserable victim of dishonesty an object of suspicion, scorn, and abhorrence. The commission of such a deed is easy. It is a deliberate abandonment of all that is desirable on earth. It is a death-blow to hope, and not unfrequently the dread forerunner of suicide and perdition.

Would you have an exemplification of these remarks, go to our prisons, and you will see many there whose early life dawned as fair and as promising as yours. They indulged high hopes, and looked forward to the possession of influence and respectability. But the love of money became their ruin. One compliance with temptation blighted their prospects, and shut them up in those gloomy cells to spend their days in misery and self-reproach.

Such dishonesty may occur from sudden temptation, where the general habit of the mind is upright;

or there may have been a previous indulgence in pilfering to a small amount. In either case, the deed is ruinous to the character; and the severity which generally marks the punishment in both cases, should warn all young men of the sin and consequences of dishonesty.

If you are placed in circumstances to need this friendly caution, you will not, I trust, consider me as questioning your honesty, while feeling it my duty to administer it. The temptation may never have crossed your mind; and your intentions in regard to the trusts reposed in you may be of the most honorable character. This however is no proof that such a temptation never *will* occur. Your circumstances may change. It is possible that evil company may gain an influence over you; and that the principles which you now consider as a safeguard, may be gradually undermined. It is possible that the objects of pleasure may so fascinate, or the love of lucre become so strong, that the one or the other, or the combined influence of both, may place you in a situation to need this warning.

The temptation to defraud, in order to be successfully resisted, must not be cherished or tampered with—no, not for an instant. Like every other temptation, it must be regarded as a suggestion of Satan, and be met by an abhorrence proportionable to the blackness of the crime and the danger to

which it exposes. It is death to entertain it for a moment. Place not yourself in circumstances to invite it. Cut off an extravagance which your means will not meet, and curb the desire of pleasures which you have not money to procure. Above all, avoid those haunts of dissipation where the gambler lurks to entrap you, or the syren woos you to inevitable destruction. How can honor or honesty stand before such determined enemies of virtue? Resist the beginning of evil. A small leak may sink the most firmly built vessel; and a trifling breach in an embankment, if not quickly stopped, may soon so widen as to produce an inundation. So it is with the principle of honesty. The smallest deviation from the strictest uprightness, the least indulgence in converting to your own use the property of others, will soon pave the way for larger and more frequent frauds, until principle, character, and decency are for ever gone.

Let me also remind you, that the sin of dishonesty is not to be measured by the amount embezzled. When a large quantity of property is fraudulently obtained, it excites more attention, and in relation to the loser, is a greater evil. But the principle which induces a man to appropriate to himself that which belongs to another, be the thing appropriated great or small, is equally base and sinful. There is one light in which a trifling speculation appears even more base. If compliance be extenuated by the

force of temptation, then the smaller the amount, the more ignoble the deed. I entreat you, therefore, as you value your character and your peace of mind, to look with abhorrence upon the least approximation to dishonesty.

There is an eye which rests upon you wherever you go, and whatever you do. Sin, ever so long concealed from man, lies open to that omniscient eye. If you would have a safeguard from temptation, you must act under the abiding impression of the sentiment, "Thou, God, seest me." You must shape your conduct by that rule which teaches you to render unto all their due; and conscious of your own inability to preserve yourself in the path of rectitude, you must commit the keeping of your soul, your character, and your hopes, to a faithful Creator, and ever pray, with David, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe."

LETTER XVII.

THE TRUE STANDARD OF COMMERCIAL HONESTY.

THERE are many who pass for honest men, whose consciences give no echo to the appellation. The grades of dishonesty, from actual peculation to the little deceptions of trade, are so numerous and ill-defined, that it is difficult, if not impossible, to draw the line where innocence ends and guilt commences. We may remark, also, that what one man would consider a justifiable course, another would pronounce dishonorable; and what one would denominate fraud, another would consider but a little shuffling, incident to the profession. So various are our views of reciprocal obligation, and so differently understood are the principles which regulate commercial intercourse.

It is not my intention to enter minutely into this subject, nor yet to pass it over in silence. I am not ignorant of the artifices, petty frauds, and deceptions which many practise who pass for honorable men. It has been my lot to mingle in the busy mart, and to know from early experience, that an upright, honest merchant, is a character not easily maintained amid the depravity, even the *tolerated* depravity of trade. To avoid a literal falsehood, and yet convey a wrong impression; to undervalue

when purchasing, and overrate when selling; these and similar expedients, for the sake of gain, are considered as involving no moral turpitude. The strong desire of wealth, and the dreaded apprehension of loss, often push men, who in other things are apparently conscientious, beyond the limits of honesty and uprightness. The only salvo they have for conscience, is the miserable apology of the trade. The only excuse they render, is the universality of the crime.

By these remarks I criminate no individual; and while I believe that there are high-minded and honorable men in every profession, I warn you of dangers and temptations which, all must admit, lie in the road to affluence. Since there are such various and conflicting views entertained on the subject of mercantile honesty, it is necessary of course to appeal to some standard of obligation, or every thing will be in chaotic uncertainty. *You* cannot judge for another, nor could you be justified in a blind adoption of another's principles. There is, I know, a certain understanding among men of trade as to what is lawful, upright, and honorable. Having, however, no standard, a committee drawn at any emergency from among them would be as likely to clash as to coincide in their views. Self-interest is apt to sway opinions on this subject, and it is nearly impossible to obtain a correct verdict on a point of commercial casuistry.

The standard which I would recommend to you, is that great law of reciprocity which came down from heaven: "In all things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." This principle is founded in kindness as well as justice; and covers in its application every possible exigency of trade. In fact, it is the only principle in conducting business which will leave your conscience free from reproach, and enable you to look back upon life's scenes with pleasure, and forward to your future account without trembling or dismay. Perhaps you think, that to act upon principles so strict would render it impossible to succeed in your enterprise. Perhaps you plead for a relaxation of this rule, on the ground of the general practice of commerce. But is it not possible to carry on a successful trade without the violation of Christian principle? Must a man, to secure a fortune, sacrifice his honesty? Then indeed you had better, far better, abandon it. Better to handle the mattock and the spade, and feel your honest bosom responding to the call of duty, than to revel in affluence by parting with your integrity. I cannot believe it impossible to pursue an occupation so honorable in itself, without violating the morality of the gospel. There are many men of high integrity and unimpeachable character engaged in such pursuits. They shall bear me witness that the difficulty lies chiefly in making "haste to be rich;" in

an insatiable avarice, which, like "the daughters of the horseleech," crieth, "Give, give!"

It is the supreme attachment to gold that begets dishonest artifices of trade. It is this which makes the seller deceive the buyer; and in return, the buyer, if possible, circumvent the seller. It is this that grudges the sacred interval of time that God in mercy has allotted to the soul, and places the worshipper of mammon at his desk and his books, while his seat in the sanctuary is vacant, and his accounts for eternity are running up with an awful acceleration.

Perhaps you are dependent upon an employer, and must conform in some measure to his mode of doing business. Here, again, it is necessary to administer a caution. I have heard of those who obliged their dependents to say and to do things in the way of business which bore a decidedly immoral aspect. The fear of his employer, and the dread of losing his place, have driven the youth into sins from which his conscience revolted. Repetition of sin produced indifference, and he who came under the care of his cruel patron with a tender regard to truth and uprightness, when thus schooled in the low arts of deception, forfeited his character, and finished his course in disgrace.

Let nothing, not even the frown of your employer, nor the fear of being driven from your station, induce you to part with your integrity. To main-

tain this at every hazard is a duty you owe to yourself, to the community, and to God. He who "heareth the ravens when they cry," will provide for your support, if, for conscience' sake, and through fear of offending him, you refuse to do that which neither he nor your own conscience can approve. That "honesty is the best policy," is an old adage, but its antiquity has not diminished its importance; and if, in every relation of life, it be taken for your guide, you will become another living testimony to its truth and its excellence.

LETTER XVIII.

TEMPTATIONS TO PRIDE AND PRODIGALITY.

THE temptations to fraud and dishonesty are not the only ones to which the pursuit of riches is exposed. The successful devotee is liable to fall into pride or prodigality. The former respects his deportment towards others, and the latter is often indicative of speedy ruin to himself. Few comparatively are exposed to the latter, while many are strongly tempted to the former.

Prodigality, however, is a vice to which the young and ardent, who have the means of indulging it, are peculiarly exposed. The love of money may take its rise in very different motives. The miser begins with parsimony, and ends in a confirmed habit of avarice. *He* seeks wealth, not for the luxuries it will enable him to enjoy, but for the sordid satisfaction which the possession of accumulated gold conveys to his soul. There is something so mean and despicable in such a character, that a *young* and generous mind is prone to the other extreme, and for fear of meanness is tempted to prodigality.

Either extreme, if not equally dangerous, should be scrupulously avoided. The one cramps the

noble powers of the soul, and makes it the sepulchre of every generous emotion. The other, with lavish hand, collects luxuries, which, like the garlands of ancient victims, seem the prophetic and mournful indications of his destruction. Both, if persisted in, will lead to eternal ruin; the one by its sordid idolatry, the other by its sensuality and defilement. There is a happy medium, which considers the claims of charity on the one hand, and the calls of personal and domestic duty on the other. There may be economy without parsimony, and a moderate enjoyment of pleasure without forbidden luxury and extravagance. There is such a thing as being generous without prodigality, and frugal without avarice. But remember, that where riches are the supreme object of desire, that happy medium will be overlooked. It can be obtained only by those who view wealth as inferior to the higher gratification of intellect, or the still higher enjoyments of religion.

It is when the eye turns upwards and contemplates sublimer things, that wealth takes its legitimate level, and the pleasures of sense are justly appreciated. It is this that graduates according to its real value, and appropriates to its proper use every blessing which a kind Providence bestows. I might enlarge on the inevitable ruin to which prodigality conducts its victim. I might tell you of young men of high hopes and flattering pros-

pects, who by this vice weakened their credit and involved themselves in ruin and disgrace. It is the gateway to early poverty; and the youth who commences in extravagance will probably end in calamity.

As wealth increases, and one gale of prosperity succeeds another, it is almost a miracle if the pride of riches do not take a deep hold on the soul. He who was accustomed to be a drudge, finds himself a director of others; and he who began with trembling hopes of a competency, perceives his coffers beginning to overflow. He finds himself rising in importance, and wielding an influence which his once sanguine desires dared not picture to his imagination. He finds one luxury after another clustering around him. As he gazes on the scene, it seems to him as if some magic power had placed him there. He is conscious of the external change, but is inattentive to its influence upon himself. That influence has gone along with the change of outward circumstances; and from being humble, condescending, and polite, he becomes haughty, self-sufficient, and domineering. The power of increasing affluence is irresistible; former friends are forgotten, and former favors overlooked. The notice and attention which riches procure are interpreted as the indications of personal esteem, and the deference which is paid to fortune is considered as the legitimate claim of intrinsic worth.

It is thus that the road to wealth is beset with dangers; and it is for these reasons that He who knows the human heart and the power of temptation, declares that "hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven." The spirit which wealth excites is generally opposed to that humility which the gospel requires, and to that holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord." Instead of favoring self-denial, it fosters self-indulgence. Instead of weaning the affections from earth, it rivets them to it the more closely. But why should a mortal man, to whom God has given riches, make them the occasion of pride or sensuality? The frail tenure by which he holds them in possession, the increase of obligation which they bring along with them, and the proportionally fearful account which must be rendered unto Him who bestowed them, should make the man of affluence humble in the view of his unfaithfulness, and fearful of the ruin to which his circumstances expose him.

I have now glanced at a few of the temptations which are spread for those who aspire after wealth. Some of them many will take the liberty to despise, while they will acknowledge that others are worthy of serious consideration. But let me entreat you, for whose benefit I write, not to think lightly of *any* of them. Fraud, avarice, prodigality, and pride are sins which expose the character to infamy, and

the soul to destruction. They cannot be neutralized by the influence of wealth, nor laughed out of the catalogue of crimes for which man must enter into judgment. They will meet all who are guilty of them, when the pageantry of riches shall have been left behind for ever.

Let me therefore, in conclusion, remind you that to guard against dishonesty, you require the fear of your Maker; to counteract avarice, you need the charity of the gospel; to escape from prodigality, you must possess a relish for spiritual enjoyments; and to keep from the sin of pride, you must have a deep insight into your own heart, a just sense of your responsibility to God, and a cheering hope of a more blissful portion in eternity. Nothing can give you these, but faith in that gospel which secures the victory over this world, and crowns its followers with the bright rewards of the kingdom of heaven.

LETTER XIX.

THE MOTIVES WITH WHICH WEALTH AND HONOR
MAY BE INNOCENTLY SOUGHT AND ENJOYED.

As in the pursuit of riches, so also in a too ardent thirst for fame, there are numerous and dangerous temptations. He who is ambitious, is as liable to sacrifice honorable principles, and endanger both his reputation and his happiness, as he who too ardently covets the possession of wealth. We would strike at the root of this evil by declaring at once, that a supreme regard to earthly honors exposes the soul to the condemnation of that law which places God first, and every thing else subordinate. The temptation begins here: the post of honor may be sought in ways which public opinion would pronounce justifiable; but being made the all-absorbing point of attraction, it becomes the occasion of sin, and according to a higher verdict than man can give, renders its pursuer liable to "the pains of the second death."

There was once a class of men who fell under the reproving voice of Him "who spake as never man spake," because "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." This is the very evil to which ambition leads. Honor is desirable; and the aspirations that beat in the young heart to

obtain it, if rightly controlled and properly directed, may not subject the soul to such an evil. But how is it possible, without the higher motives of religion, to run the race of earthly honor, and not be in danger of overlooking "the honor which cometh from God?" The impossibility of serving two masters applies with the same force in this case as in the one previously considered.

There are persons occupying a high place in the records of fame, and some who stood on the loftiest pinnacles of her temple, who, though "bearing earthly honors thick upon them," fixed their highest affections upon heaven. There have been warriors who fought not for fame, but for religion and for their country. While led on by the approving voice of conscience, their success has secured to them the meed of glory. To them the chaplet was but an incidental trifle, and the eulogy of the public less grateful than the consciousness of having discharged their duty. There have been statesmen whose religion gave the impulse to their patriotism, and whose highest satisfaction was derived from the anticipation of the final plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." There have been learned men who have labored to enlighten the world; and poets who, in breathing out their lofty strains of devotion, have unexpectedly found themselves enrolled on the records of fame.

The highest object of pursuit should lie beyond the narrow confines of earth. The first thing is to secure the immortality of the skies. That being obtained, if wealth and honor attend your passage through life, you will experience more than the import of the promise comprised in the injunction of our Lord, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Like the son of David, ask first for the "wisdom that is from above," and with it you shall also receive inferior blessings, which shall prove the more grateful the less they were anticipated.

The ambitious are inclined not only to make fame the highest object of their desires, and thus overlook their paramount obligations to God, but in their progress towards the dizzy height, they are exposed to the temptations of envy and detraction. Competitors they must and will have. They must meet and measure strength with each other, and receive, through the ordeal of public criticism, a formal adjudication of their powers. They will occasionally come in contact with their superiors, and must submit to a contest terminating in defeat. They must sometimes experience the mortification of beholding a rival with fewer advantages and acknowledged inferiority intervene between them and their reward, and before they have recovered from the surprise, the unexpected competitor bears

away the palm, and binds his head with the laurel which they had anticipated.

Amidst such a struggle for preëminence, how is it possible, in view of the natural depravity of man, to doubt the existence of envy, or to deny the frequent indulgence of detraction. The jarring strife of politics, the barbed arrows of the satirist, the newspaper defamation, and the illiberal and indecent attacks upon personal character and motives which disgrace the proceedings of deliberative bodies, furnish so many ways in which the spirit of envy and detraction are cherished and invigorated. They are the outlets of those fires that scorch the bosom and scathe the victim upon whom they fall. Like the gloomy cloud surcharged with the elements of destruction, the votaries of ambition move along, rumbling with restrained wrath, and ready to flash death upon any who may venture to oppose them. The world is full of this collision. It is confined to no profession or pursuit. Whenever selfishness is cherished as the controlling motive, envy will corrode every benevolent feeling, and detraction exhaust its malignant quiver.

Happy is that man who can feel a generous sympathy in the misfortunes of a rival. Happy is he who can rejoice in the success of a contemporary, whose talents eclipse and whose powers exceed his own. Alas, how few can endure to hear the praises that are lavished upon another. Where detraction

dares not speak, envy will secretly mutter her repinings. The least meed of commendation bestowed upon others is regarded by the ambitious as an indignity to themselves; and often, where an opinion *must* be given of another, it is expressed in words so cautiously indifferent, as to hit an intended medium between calumny and praise.

Exertions for power and influence are attended with vexation and trouble. If you *can* mount the rugged height without envy on the one hand or detraction on the other; if you can feel a generous ardor that shall desire influence for the sake of using it for the glory of God and the good of your fellow-men; then, instead of restraining, I would impel you in the career. But if your pursuit of reputation lead you into the indulgence of calumny, if it absorb the soul, you are in danger. Your success on earth may be coincident with the forfeiture of your happiness in eternity. If unsuccessful, you will become the victim of morbid self-reproach, which will react in proportion to the strength of your disappointed expectations.

LETTER XX.

TEMPTATIONS PECULIAR TO CITIES AND COLLEGES.

WHEREVER circumstances throw a large number of young men into each other's society, and where similar pursuits naturally lead to a homogeneous character, temptations are forcible, and often fatally successful. This happens in large cities and in literary institutions. In the former, there is a vast concourse of young men assembled from all parts of the country, who come together as adventurers in the pursuit of affluence or pleasure. Some bring with them a reputable character and correct moral principles; others come to give loose to evil propensities which, in the country and under the restraints of home, were kept in some subordination.

When these characters mingle in a large and bustling city, the former class will naturally be exposed to the seductions of the latter. The pioneers in wickedness, the practised and hardened crew who have abandoned themselves to the indulgence of their passions, lie in ambush to seize upon their victim and hurry him to ruin. Hundreds of such, with a comparatively plausible exterior, may be found in our cities. Some of them manage to keep up an outward show of decency, and conduct their plans of dissipation in so covert a manner, as

neither to fall into disgrace nor excite suspicion or investigation. These are most to be dreaded. Those who have gone beyond the bounds of external decency, and become so hardened as to feel no shame, have less influence in proportion to their loss of character and their notoriety in crime. A moral youth feels contaminated by their approach. Any visible connection with such would be at once a forfeiture of character.

It is men of fair professions and unsuspected wickedness, plausible, but insidious, who are most to be feared, because most likely to be successful. Practised in the arts of temptation, they make a gradual advance upon the ingenuous and unsuspecting youth. They insinuate themselves into his confidence and friendship. When they have learned his scruples and fathomed his character, they begin the work of drawing him on to their own desperate state of hypocrisy and crime. They will represent as mean what is only frugal, and characterize as childish those scruples of conscience which it is their object to eradicate. They will first appeal to curiosity, and then make curiosity the avenue to crime. They will speak of the possibility of concealment, and insist that we could not have been endowed with propensities which it is unlawful to indulge. They will represent as manly what is mean and debasing, and tauntingly ascribe to superstition what is but the sober dictate of reason and