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CHOICE OF A PROFESSION :

AN ADDRESS

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THE

CHOICE OF A PROFESSION.

TO THOSE engaged in the cares and responsibilities of public or private life, there are few periods more grateful than when they are permitted to revisit the scenes of their own academic years, or the scenes where others are preparing to act their part in the world. It recalls to our minds the feelings which we ourselves had in our early life. It brings fresh to our remembrance our plans and prospects ; our hopes and fears, when from the peaceful walls of a college, we looked on the stormy ocean on which we were about to embark. It is a period, when we cannot but compare the reality with the anticipation, and ask ourselves whether the world has been to us what we thought it would be ; whether it has furnished us those pleasures which we expected ; whether our plans were laid in wisdom, and whether we were then directed by right principles in the choice of a profession for life.

It is a duty, also, which we owe to those who are about to enter on public life, to come to them in the beginning of their way, and to commune with them in regard to their hopes and prospects ; their duties and their dangers. If we have gained any knowledge by our experience, it is our duty freely to impart it to them. If we see dangers which they do not see, it is our duty to apprise them of those dangers. If we have discovered any important principles that have been of use to us, it is our duty to communicate the fact to them. If we see any way of avoiding the temptations and dangers to which they will be

exposed, we owe it to them, to the church, to our country, and to the world, to apprise them of it. If we have learned that it is desirable that any thing should be done when we are dead ; that there are any great enterprises commenced, which must stretch far into coming ages, and which can be completed only by those who are advancing to the stage of action, we owe it to them, to apprise them of those plans, and to give them the results of our observation in regard to the best mode of executing them. And if our minds become impressed with the greatness of the work to be done ; with the importance of any enterprise connected with literature, morals, religion, liberty, or the laws, what is more natural than that we should seek such an opportunity to urge the language of affectionate entreaty on those who are entering on the journey of life, and to conjure them to perfect that which our hearts desire when our hands shall be powerless, and our tongues silent in death ? We love to greet those who are just entering on life, with friendly salutations ; and to welcome them to take part in the toils and in the honors of public life ; and to assure them of our readiness to commit to them, under God, all that is dear in the interests of redemption and of liberty, when we shall be called away.

It is with feelings such as these, that those who are invited to address the young men in our colleges, at the periods of the annual commencements, come back from the cares and toils of public life. It is not to dictate ; not to claim that we are superior in knowledge to those who preside over these institutions, or to imply that there is any defect of proper counsel or instruction there. It is to bring back from the world the results of experience ; to give confirmation to the counsels of the instructors in colleges and seminaries ; to endeavor to strengthen their hands by testimony that is impartial, and by experience that is often dearly purchased ; and to greet those who are entering on public life, with assurances of the deep interest which we feel in their welfare, and with the pledges that they will find in those who have gone before them, men who will delight to be their counselors and their friends.

The Society which I am invited to address at this time, is a

Society of "Inquiry." Having for its object, primarily indeed, the condition of the world at large as a field of future labor, it is not improper to suppose that it comes within the appropriate range of the inquiries of its members, to ask on what principles A PROFESSION ITSELF SHOULD BE CHOSEN; or, what should determine in regard to the course of life which they themselves shall pursue. To this inquiry, I propose now to ask your attention; and shall accomplish the object which I have in view, if I may be able to state appropriately the importance of this inquiry; the dangers of error; and the principles which should guide a young man in the choice.

Every young man is aware of the importance of this inquiry. He feels that every thing is concentrated on it; and at the same time, that there is no inquiry more perplexing, or more embarrassing. It is entered on in circumstances of the deepest interest; it is to be prosecuted in circumstances fitted to engross all his feelings and to command his most fixed attention. The anxieties of a father, and the tender solicitude of a mother, all center here; and on this choice, they feel that much if not all that is connected with the welfare of the son of their affections, is dependent. His own hopes, also, all cluster around this investigation. He cannot but see that it is to determine all his future way of life. It is to fix his plans, his associates, his reading, his studies, his vocation; it is to determine his train of thought, and to give an entire direction to all his way through the world. We look upon young men in college life, with interest analogous to that which we feel when we see the ship making ready for sea, as she lies in the port, and as we see the waves ripple by her side. We know not as yet what is her destination; but we know that wherever she goes, she may encounter storms and tempests. Thus in regard to the young man who has not yet made choice of his profession. We know not what is to be his course of life; but we can apprise him of temptations, dangers and toils, whatever may be his course; and tell him that *wherever* he goes, he will need all his manly courage, and all the principles of virtue with which he can fill his mind and heart. *When* he has made choice of his profession, we look upon him

as we do on the gallant ship with her sails all set, as she glides along towards a *destined* port. We know that while there are storms and tempests which *may* meet her anywhere, yet we can now fix the eye more definitely on those dangers which beset her way. We think not of storms in general, but of trade winds or levanters; of the storms of the frozen north; or the calms and currents that usually beset the way which she sails. So in the choice of a profession. There are common perils which beset man wherever he may be. But the choice of a profession gives a determination to those perils, and leads us to mark them with moral certainty.

At the same time, it is a choice which is not easily made. It is a situation where a young man must act for himself; and is, perhaps, usually the first thing that deeply affects his welfare on which he himself determines. His parents provide for his wants; his instructors impart to him knowledge;—his profession he must choose for himself. With all the light which he can derive from the experience of others on the subject, his own mind is to determine the question at last, and himself throw the die which is to decide his destiny. Yet how much knowledge is requisite to form his choice, so that he will have no occasion to regret it, when at the close of life he shall look back on this period! How much knowledge of himself; of his talents, tendencies, capabilities; of the qualifications requisite for a particular calling; of the temptations which may be in his way; of the kind of influences which may bear upon him; of the things which may be needful to contribute to his success, or the things which may impede his progress, when his all shall be dependent on success in that calling, and when it shall be too late to repair the errors of an improper selection.

The most important period, therefore, in a man's life is that in which he makes choice of a profession. Some of the reasons of this are the following. One is, that that choice will do more than all other things to determine his *character*. The character of man is partly formed by the plans or objects which he has in view, and partly by the circumstances in which he is placed—the scenes by which he is surrounded, and the men

with whom he is called to associate. It is true, that the original bent of the mind, often, perhaps usually, determines the choice of a profession ; and it is true, also, that the choice itself, tends to arrest the development of certain traits of character, and to call others into vigorous and permanent existence. The choice fixes that which was before unfixed in character ; gives resoluteness to that which was undetermined ; suppresses many traits which before had a partial development ; and which if another profession had been chosen, might have been called into full operation ; and developes resources which were before unknown to the man and to his friends. Illustrations of this obvious truth, might be drawn from all the professions and callings of life. Until this choice is made, the mind and the passions are, often, like an untrimmed and untrained vine, left to grow with luxurious wildness and without restraint. The imagination roams over every object, and feels no special interest in any. The powers of mind are suffered to shoot forth in every direction, and the soul finds a pleasure in the untrammelled exercise of its own exuberant faculties—as the boy finds a pleasure in the sport and play which braces all his muscles and gives vigor to his frame.

But when a profession is determined on, when the choice is made for life, the powers of the soul become settled in a definite direction ; the attention is turned to a single object, and then points of character and powers of mind which have a bearing on that calling, are all developed and fixed, and soon constitute all that we know of the man. Other traits of character are laid aside, or suppressed ; other developments of mind are checked and restrained, and we know the man only by those which his chosen calling developes and nourishes. We are all familiar with the facts in regard to the bodily frame. The waterman developes fully one class of muscles, the smith another, the farmer another, the racer another, and the pugilist another. So it is in the choice of a profession in regard to the physical and moral powers. The choice of a military profession, for example, will leave uncultivated many principles and feelings which would have been called into exercise in mercantile life, or in the medical profession ; it will quicken into energy many

traits which in those professions might have lain dormant forever. The selection of an agricultural or mechanical employment, will suppress many traits of mind which would have been developed in the ministry or at the bar, and will give a permanency to traits, which in other callings would have been scarcely known. The choice determines the objects to be aimed at ; the current of the thoughts ; the books that shall be read ; and to a large extent, the whole train of influences that shall come in and bear upon the character.

The same result follows from another circumstance. A man's character is very materially formed by the events by which he is surrounded, by the objects with which he is conversant, by the character of men with whom he is associated, by the plans which he of necessity forms to fill up the scheme of life. He who becomes a mariner, is surrounded by one set of influences and one class of men ; a traveler to distant climes and among strangers by another ; a man in political life by another ; a merchant by another ; a lawyer, a physician, or a minister of the gospel by others. He, whose profession leads him to the gay and crowded city, is encompassed by one set of influences that bear on his character ; he who spends his happier days in the sweet and quiet scenes of a country life by another. The whole course of life, receives its color and cast by the direction which is given to it at that eventful moment when the choice is made ; like a stream whose waters receive their color from the soil through which it runs, or its appearance from the rocks and trees which overhang its banks. And though to a young man making the choice, it may not *seem* to be important whether he shall turn in this direction or in that, yet the choice will send an influence ever onward through life, and mark all its future course, and its close. The waters of the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi rise near each other. Where they rise, it seems to be a small matter whether they flow to the north or to the south ; and a slight difference in the elevation determines the direction of their flowing. Yet one portion, swelled by one set of streams, constituting " the father of rivers," runs on through almost a thousand leagues towards the equator ; the other swelled by accumulating lakes,

and rivers in another direction, pours its floods into the frozen seas of the north. They find their way to the ocean under different skies, and among different people, and in the remotest latitudes, as two young men starting together in life and determined by slight circumstances in regard to the choice of their respective callings, shall reach the ocean of eternity, having traversed far different regions, with far different characters, and having met with far different allotments in their earthly course. The events which go to form the character accumulate constantly to the end of life, determined by the choice that is made at first, like the accumulating waters of the river as it rolls on augmenting its volume and its velocity, until life is lost in the broad ocean of eternity.

I may add here, that the importance of this choice is manifest from another circumstance. It usually determines a man's destiny not only in this life, but in an important sense in the life that is to come. It is not only the starting point which is to determine the amount of wealth, honor, and happiness which he is to possess in this world, but it strikes ever onward into those unknown regions which are beyond the grave. For it is rare that men change their calling in life. It is never done but with disadvantage. Once done, it subjects a man to the charge of fickleness, and does *something* to weaken the confidence of others in the stability of his principles. Twice done, or thrice, it seldom fails to ruin his character. Success in any calling, or in life at large, depends probably more than on any thing else, on stability of purpose and settled intention. Disaster follows in the train of revolution of character and of plan. When the magnet points steadily in one direction, the ship glides safely over the heaving billows; when it is unsettled and vacillating, every thing is in danger. When a man has once, therefore, made choice of a profession, every consideration of honor, of self-respect, and even the hope of success at all in life, will demand of him perseverance in the course which he has chosen. There is not a situation in his life which will not be affected by this choice; and the effects of that selection will not only meet

him in his way through this world, but they will meet him in the interminable state of existence beyond the tomb.

Yet while the importance of this choice cannot but be felt by all, it is also apparent, that it is a subject which is attended with great difficulty, and that there is great danger of erring in regard to it. I allude particularly here to the young men of our own country ; and I refer to those dangers of erring for the purpose of conducting us to the true principles on which the choice should be made. Any one who contemplates the state of mind when a profession is usually selected, will be sensible in a moment of the danger of error. It is, of necessity, in the commencement of life. It is when there has been but little observation of the world, and a most slender experience. It is where, from the nature of the case, the young man must be but very imperfectly acquainted with his own talents, and when his adaptedness to a particular calling has had but slight opportunity to develop itself. It is at a time of high anticipation, of gilded prospects, of cheering and delusive hopes. It is at a time when appeals are made to the senses, and when the allurements of ambition are held out to the view, and the glitter of wealth attracts the eye. It is a time when conscience is not always allowed to utter its stern admonitions, and when passion is in danger of usurping the place of principle, and the love of wealth or fame to take the place of the love of country and of God. And yet it is manifest, that if at any time of life conscience and sober reason and fixed principle should occupy the throne, it is at the time when a young man selects the course which he will pursue, and enters on the way which he is to tread through all the journey of life. This act, more than any other, should be such as shall abide the investigation of future years, and the calm retrospections of that period when the fires of youthful passion shall be extinct, and when life shall be about to be closed.

These dangers of error beset all young men, in all countries and at all times. But I wish particularly to ask your attention to some dangers in this matter, which, it seems to me, peculiarly beset the young men of this land. I would observe then, that there is danger, in this nation, of undervaluing those callings in

life on which the very existence of our social organization depends, and of overvaluing those professions and callings which contribute in a very slight degree to the real welfare of society. There is danger that some professions will be crowded with greedy and clamorous aspirants, and that others, more happy, peaceful, and truly honorable, will be deemed disreputable, and to a large extent will be unoccupied. As an illustration of what I mean, I may refer you to the fact that in no nation, and at no time, have there been so many opportunities of amassing sudden wealth as in this land. The consequence is, that this has become almost the ruling passion in this nation, and that every avenue that promises to lead to wealth is crowded; every scheme is tried; every plan of enterprise, no matter how wild or hazardous, is entered on; and the nation, as such, is pre-eminently distinguished by this passion. The mightiest energies of the land are put forth with reference to this object; and mountains are leveled, and vallies are exalted, and the farthest streams are ascended under the mighty influence of the love of gain. Now the danger of which I speak is obvious. It is that of undervaluing the more slow and certain methods of gain with which our fathers were contented, and which were consistent with, and connected with the pure virtues of life, and with the calmness of domestic peace, and with the service of God. There is in this whole nation, a state of things that strongly tends to induce men to despise the principles which led Cincinnatus to love his plow, and Washington to delight in the scenes of Mount Vernon. And it is to be feared that there is many a young man entering on life who would deem it dishonor to emulate the hardy Roman, and disdain to act on the principles of the father of his country. And there is perhaps nothing in our land that threatens to strike a deeper blow at all that is valuable and pure than this insatiable love of gold. Let it never be forgotten by the young man that is entering on life, that all the virtues which have thus far adorned our land, and all which *can* adorn it, are those which cluster around the pursuits of honest and sober industry. The cultivation of the soil, and the callings of sober and hardy toil, are not only consistent with, but are productive of the highest virtues;

and our colleges and schools do not accomplish their purpose unless they impress those who are trained there with the conviction that there is no degradation in going from walls like these to hold the plow, and to cultivate the virtues and engage in the toils of what is usually deemed obscure and humble life.

Allied to this is another danger of error. In this nation every avenue to honor is likely to be crowded. Every office is open to any man ; and it is well that the young men who are now coming on to the stage of action should be prepared to discharge the duties of the various offices in the gift of the people. But what I refer to is, that there is in this country an over estimate of the value of office ; that there is a desire to secure its avails and its honors, that is unsettling the sober habits which become us as a people ; that there is a choice of a profession made often because it is supposed to be connected with the ultimate attainment of office ; and that consequently the useful and somewhat humble professions are overlooked or despised. There is nothing more inexpressibly mean than the spirit of office-seeking ; nothing in this land that is more humiliating to our pride as citizens and as men, than the scramble which is apparent every where for office, be it the presidential chair or be it the humblest function in the gift of a town meeting. And yet, while every high-minded and honorable man must despise this from his heart, it is probable that no small part of the young men in this nation are shaping their course, and selecting their calling with reference to future office,—perhaps some *thousands* now entering on life with the eye fixed on the highest office in the gift of the American people. And there has grown up among us a publicity in self-nomination and self recommendation as foreign to the true nature of our institutions as it is to the sober views of our fathers. To a large portion of such aspirants, life *must* be, as it should be, a series of disappointments. They have no talent for the rank which they seek ; and the senate chamber or the cabinet need not their counsel. In every place they are destined to failure ; or if successful, the happiness which they sought will have fled at their approach, and have left them to sadness and grief. The glitter of office allured and deceived them ; and

they who might have been happy, and virtuous, and respected in humbler life, become destitute of moral principle in seeking promotion, and forfeit the smiles of an approving conscience, and die with the conviction that they have lived in vain.

It is of great importance, therefore, to understand aright the principles on which a profession should be made. To some of those principles I now invite your attention.

1. The first which I mention is, that the most should be made of life that can possibly be made of it; and that that profession or calling should be selected where life can be best turned to account. Life is short at best; and we have no exuberant powers of mind or body to waste. "We all do fade," says the Bible, "as a leaf;" in the language of the bard of Avon, as "the seer and yellow leaf of autumn." Our day, even in its highest meridian glory, "hastens," as Wolsey said his did, "to its setting." In the arrangements and designs of divine Providence, life is crowded with vast and important purposes. All the interests of society, of learning, liberty and order; of science, public morals and religion are to be preserved, and to be constantly augmented. We are to maintain our hold on what has been delivered to us from the past, and we are to transmit it unimpaired and augmented to future times.

There is at any one time talent enough on earth to accomplish all the purposes which society then needs for immediate use, or to perfect the improvements requisite to advance the interests of any community, or to adapt its affairs to a coming age,—as there is at any time an ample supply in the bosom of the earth of all the minerals which the necessities of the world shall demand. Yet that talent often slumbers,—as the vast mines of gold and silver lie unworked or useless from age to age. The circumstances which exist are not sufficient to call it forth; or it lies withered and prostrate by the prevalence of indolence; or the arrangements of society are not such as to give it play and power. There has been many a period of the world when the mighty powers of Napoleon would have lain dormant; and had not a storm and tempest been created that demanded such a spirit to preside over it and direct its fury, he might have lived

and died an unknown Corsican. Nor can it be doubted that the world has contained many minds as capable as he was of concentrating the fury of battle, and of drenching the earth in blood, and of transferring crowns, had the occasions existed for calling such talent forth. Demosthenes and Cicero were not the only men in ancient times who were endowed with a talent for eloquence; Leonidas was not the only man whose patriotism would have made him willing to bleed at Thermopylæ. Tell and Wallace were not the only men who have been endowed with love of country adapted to resist tyranny; and Luther was not the only man that was fitted to break the chains of spiritual despotism, and to conduct the world through the fiery and stormy times of spiritual revolution. This thought was long since expressed in the well-known beautiful language of Gray:

“ 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.
 Some village Hampden that with dauntless breast
 The little tyrant of the fields withstood;
 Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
 Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.”

But talent is not only buried; a large part of the genius and enterprise of the world is perverted and wasted. That which might have been called forth in the defence of liberty and learning, and the pure institutions of religion, is employed for purposes of conquest, oppression, pollution, and blood. It is melancholy to look over the past history of the world; and it is almost equally melancholy to contemplate the existing facts on this subject in the cities and towns even of our own land. It is sad to think how much has been done by perverted talent to open fountains of tears, and to dig the grave of liberty and of happiness and of virtue. It is sad to think, that the highest powers of mind are often called into their most vigorous exercise in our world only to augment human misery, and to prolong the reign of sin. Every man is fitted by nature for some particular walk in life; and to find that course is the great secret of a proper selection of a profession. Yet an error is often made; and

a struggle exists ever onward between the tendencies of genius cramped and fettered, and the forced and fitful efforts which are demanded by the selected calling. In that chosen calling the soul never can rise. It has no love for its work; it has no adaptedness to it. It is a stranger in that walk of life; and life there is a sad and unsuccessful struggle, a forced and unnatural way. "The stars in their courses" seem to "fight against" the man. His character may be without reproach; but life is ended, and nothing valuable is done; and it is manifest to all, that he never found the path for which the God of nature designed him. Life too is wasted in enterprises that are useless when they are accomplished. Talent exhausts itself in an effort to erect some huge pile that shall attract the wonder of the world; some plan of building a pyramid or a splendid mausoleum; or some design of making a book profound in speculation remote from all practical utility, and separate from all the common purposes of life. With almost equal sadness of thought a man will look on the useless piles which the pride of Egyptian monarchs reared, and walk through a vast library surrounded by massive tomes, useless monuments of the mighty dead. So life is wasted in the play and blaze of genius, as if it delighted to revel in the mere sportiveness of its own powers. Thus poems, and novels, and romances are the creations of genius that delights in the play of its own powers,—powers often, in regard to the great practical purposes of life, utterly wasted. So talent is worse than wasted in scenes of dissipation and in sin. Heavy curses roll from lips from which

—— "the violated law might speak out
Its thunders,"

or,

———— "in strains as sweet
As angels use, the Gospel whisper peace."

And plans of infamy are formed in hearts that might originate schemes that would bless benighted nations; and frames vigorous and manly that might bear the cold of northern snows or the heat of Arabian deserts in diffusing civilization and christianity, are blasted and wrecked in the loathsome scenes of dissipation and vice. So talent is worse than wasted in enterprises

that are pernicious and ruinous. It is exhausted in schemes of conquest; it binds down mind, and fetters the energies of nations by irresistible laws; it invents instruments of cruelty and drenches nations in blood. Of all the monuments of past times, how few record the advances in the arts and sciences; how few tell of the progress of morals and of piety. How many have been reared to tell only of battle, and of deeds of conquest and cruelty. How many triumphal arches are over the grave of freedom; how many lofty pillars are reared to tell only where some master spirit of wickedness triumphed over civil liberty and the rights of unoffending nations. Perhaps one of the most comprehensive descriptions of our world would be, that it is a world of wasted and perverted talent; a world where immense powers of mind have either slumbered, or have blazed, meteor-like, for nought; or been called forth for purposes of cruelty and blood. And it is so now. How much of life is wasted. How often does genius exhaust itself in some wild, impracticable, and visionary object, that mocks all the rules of wisdom, and makes certain its own defeat. How many men sink down to the grave with scarcely a monument set up all along their way to tell their friends, or their country, or the church of God, that they ever lived. And even of the numbers that go forth from our colleges annually, how few seem to start with the purpose to make the most of life, or to turn it to any purpose that shall permanently affect the destinies of men.

God did not design that it should be so. He did not call the powers of mind into existence for nought. He has created in any given generation only so much talent as is adapted to fulfill all the great purposes, moral, intellectual, social, and religious of that generation. And he has made enough for all those purposes. If they are perverted, abused, wasted, society is a loser, and its progress is put back. The evil strikes at the heart of the social organization, and cannot, perhaps be repaired for ages. If these powers are called forth for useless objects, to gratify the fancy merely, it is as though they had not been made; if in schemes of conquest, and rapine, and fraud, and piracy, they put back the advancement of the race; if they are excited by an unnatural

stimulus, under the baneful influence of intoxicating fires, they exhaust themselves with the unnatural energy, and wear out the system, like a machine without balance-wheel or governor, where the accumulating and terrible force soon tears it to pieces, and spreads ruin all around it.

Every thing in life, therefore, depends on the right direction which shall be given in the choice of a calling. Nearly all the evils which have resulted from perverted and wasted talent, or from slumbering energies might have been avoided, by a proper direction in the commencement ; and all might have been avoided by a settled purpose to make the most of life. “ You are a great fool,” said a fellow student to Paley when he was wasting his early years in a course of dissipation. “ You have talent which might raise you to the highest distinction. I have none, and it matters not how my life is spent.” Paley took the hint so roughly given ; and his subsequent course is well known. There is no name in the English church, perhaps, that should stand higher than his ; there are few in the vast circles of English literature whose just fame shall be more extensively or permanently recorded. And so in all cases of perverted and ruinous talent. The author of *Childe Harold* *might* have sung in strains as pure, as full of sweet benevolence, and as much fitted to benefit men as the author of the *Task* ; and the author of *Waverly*, that mighty man whose productions are so far diffused and which exert now such an influence, an influence which *must* wane when the world shall come to love truth more than fiction, — *might* have employed his talents in productions that should have gone down to remotest times with the *Novum Organum*, the *Treatise on the Understanding*, or the *Paradise Lost*.

The first principle, therefore, which should guide in the choice of a profession is, that the most should be made of life ; that talent should not be suffered to exhaust itself for nought ; and should not be expended in wild and ruinous enterprises. The second which I suggest is ; that where there is a fitness for either of two or more courses of life, a young man should choose that in which he can do most to benefit his fellow men. Society is organized on the principle, that any lawful employment will not

only not injure, but will advance the happiness of the whole community, as the movement of each part of a well-constructed machine will not only not embarrass, but will advance the harmonious and regular operation of every other part. A man commonly chooses a calling with a primary reference to his own interest, with a view to a livelihood, or to a well-earned reputation. And the Great Author of human happiness has so arranged the various relations and dependences of society, that while this is the main object, yet in any lawful employment the welfare of the whole shall be promoted. The farmer, the lawyer, the merchant, the physician, the clergyman, at the same time that he may be in the main pursuing his own interest, is the source of benefit to all the other departments of society. For illustration, it is undoubtedly true, that every man *might* be his own physician and in some way prescribe for his own maladies, and those of his family. But it is a *saving* in time, expense, and happiness, that there should be men regularly trained in the healing art, and who should devote their time to it. Although the principle which prompted the man to embrace the medical profession may have been, in the main, the promotion of his own welfare, the securing of an honest livelihood, and the earning of an honorable reputation, he is at the same time advancing the happiness of all others, and promoting the welfare of society at large. So it is with all other lawful professions. Nor are there any callings which are an exception to this, except those which involve a violation of the laws of God. And perhaps there is no more direct way of deciding on the propriety of any calling in life than by determining the question whether it will or will not advance the happiness of others. Any man in a lawful occupation will be at every step of his life contributing to the welfare of all the other departments of society.

It is undoubtedly true also, that the God of nature has fitted man to some particular calling in life; and that it is in virtue of this original adaptation, in connection with Providential arrangements, that the several professions are filled, and that the wheels of society are made to move on in harmony. Many a man, for instance, is by nature unfitted to be a preacher of the gospel.

There is an utter and insuperable want of adaptedness in his mental powers, in his temperament, and in his propensities, for such a work. And in like manner there are men who are unfitted to be merchants. There is something about their original structure of mind, or their temperament, that utterly forbids success. So many a man has no mechanical genius; many a man has no qualification for public and official life. With this fact we are all familiar, alike in relation to the most elevated and to the humblest employments; and the divine agency in appointing and in perpetuating and superintending this diversity of gifts, is one of the most striking proofs of a controlling Providence. It is like the economy which has placed pearls in one part of the earth, and diamonds, and gold, and the ruby, and the topaz in others; or which has made one soil and climate adapted to the production of aromatics; another to the production of rich and healthful fruits; another eminently to plants of medicinal virtue, that thus the world may be united in one great brotherhood, mutually dependent and harmonious.

But, on the other hand, it is also true, that many a man may be almost equally fitted for any one of two or more different occupations. He may not be a universal genius. But he may have such a structure of mind and such moral qualifications that he may, with equal safety in regard to ultimate success, select any one of two or more callings in life; and the principle which I am now stating is, that he should select that in which he may most permanently and widely affect favorably the destiny of his fellow men. The industry, the skill, and the cool calculation, for instance, which are so valuable in the mercantile profession, why may it not be turned to account in the great work of the conversion of the world? and why may it not be supposed, that in the mercantile calling there is many a man whose duty it was to have devoted his talents for business to the designs of the salvation of mankind? The eloquence and the power of thought which are required in the defence of violated rights at the bar, why may they not be equally appropriate and powerful in persuading men to be reconciled to God? And is it an unreasonable thought, that there are many men in the legal profession

who would better have accomplished the great ends of society had their talents been consecrated to the service of God the Savior? The manly argument, and the pure diction on which "listening senates" hang, why may they not be equally mighty in making known the redemption of the world by the Son of God, and in vindicating the ways of God to man? And is it uncharitable to suppose that there is many a greedy aspirant for office; many a man qualified to give counsel in the affairs of state, who might have more permanently benefitted society and the world by devoting his powers to the ministry of reconciliation? The lofty and daring enterprise that will climb the mountain and ascend the stream; that will cross the ocean and traverse burning sands, for adventure or for gold, why may it not exhibit as noble daring in making known amid the snows of the north and the burning climes of the equator, the name of the Savior? And is it unfair to suppose that there may be many a young man in this nation endowed with this talent for daring enterprise, who is wasting his powers and prostrating his energies for that which shall produce no permanent good effect in society, who might have made his influence felt in the nations that are now sitting in the region and shadow of death?

Now where this equal adaptedness to one of two or more professions exists, the principle which should regulate the choice is an obvious one. It is not to be regulated by the love of adventure, or fame, or gold, or ease. It is to be directed by a desire to make the most of that talent in furthering the interests of man. A young man should not infer that because his talents are fitted to a mercantile life, or to the bar, or to the medical profession; or because he supposes he could gain an honorable distinction in the councils or the cabinets of the nation, that *therefore* he is to choose that line of life. He may be also fitted to a calling that shall tell on the welfare of the world, and on the destinies of eternity; and *if so*, his way is clear and his course is plain. The gratification of self; the love of honor and of gold; the fondness for ease, or the thirst for applause, is to be sacrificed to the nobler pursuit; and he is to evince the highest attainments of mind in showing how all these can be subdued in the elevated

purpose of doing the most that can be done to promote the welfare of man.

I proceed to the statement of a third principle which should regulate the choice of a profession. It is, that he is to select that where he can call most auxiliaries to his aid, either those already existing in society, or which he may be able to originate for the accomplishment of his plans. Man can accomplish little alone. His own arm, if solitary, is feeble. His own plans, unless he can enlist the co-operation of other minds, will be powerless. Alexander could have accomplished nothing in the conquest of the world if he had had no power of acting on other minds. Luther could have done little for the reformation, if he could not have called to his aid other minds, and if he could not have commanded the mighty power of the press. If a man wishes to accomplish much, it must be in connection with combination and alliance. And he who wishes to effect any valuable purpose in life, will throw himself as much as possible into those central places of power from which he may be able to act on the objects which surround him. If he can, he will make the winds, and the waves, and the streams subservient to his will; he will seize upon those positions of influence which shall most extensively subsidize to his purpose the voluntary efforts and the plans of his fellow men, and make them tributary to his own. How much man multiplies his power by the aid of machinery; how much he may augment his influence by seizing upon the press; how far may he extend his agency by placing himself in central points of action, and seeking to radiate his moral influence in all directions. There never has been a period of the world where man might call to his assistance so many auxiliaries in the accomplishment of his plans as at present; there never has been a time when he could so certainly reach and affect all parts of society, or set in motion a train of operations that shall continue to expand themselves when he is dead, as the circles in the smooth lake extend to the distant shore long after the pebble has sunk to the bottom. Such points and centres of influence are not now extensively to be originated. They are made ready to our hands as we enter on life. No small part

of the discoveries in science and the inventions in the arts have resulted in the creation of such centres of moral power; and when we enter on life they are all around us. The various professions; the press; the public offices; the seats of learning; the institutions of benevolence, are all such central points of moral influence; and are all soon to be filled and directed by the coming generation. He makes the wisest choice in a profession who places himself where he can call most of these auxiliaries to his aid; where he can most effectually bind himself to the great departments of society; and where he can bring into subserviency to his own plans most of those powers which are adapted to act on the minds of men.

I may add here, that, at present, there is no one position in society where a young man may call more of those auxiliaries to his aid than in the pulpit. It is, as it was designed to be, the center of moral power in the world; and to the advancement of its designs the progress of society will more and more contribute.

——— “The pulpit, (in the sober use
Of its legitimate and sober powers,)
Must stand acknowledged, while the world shall stand,
The most important and effectual guard,
Support, and ornament of Virtue’s cause.”

I do not mean, that there is or that there should be any superstitious deference paid to it. I do not mean, that it has or should have any power, as in time past, to control the faith or punish men. I do not mean, that it should interfere with the freedom of the most unfettered inquiry. I do not mean, that the incumbent in the sacred office should expect to make his way by dictation or by authority; by denunciation and by the aid of dungeons, and stripes, and chains; or by the magic power of bands and surplices; of titles and of the crosier. These times have gone by, and they will no more return. But it is by the power which God designed, the power of argument and persuasion; the power which is to go forth from an irreproachable character and consistent life; the power which learning and elevated worth are to command, and must command; the power arising from the deference which is to be paid, and which will be cheerfully paid by schools and seminaries of learning to those

who are worthy of the sacred office ; and the power of acting on the destinies of men through the press and in the great enterprises of christian benevolence. I may add, also, that the work of the ministry is that alone which shall be permanent. On every thing else is passing the hand of death and decay. Your houses and your palaces shall all fall to ruin. Your schemes of honor and wealth shall all come to an end. The very cities and towns where you may live shall decay. The solid earth, "the cloud-capped towers, the solemn temples," the gorgeous palaces, and the great globe itself shall dissolve, and leave not a wreck behind. The ancient monuments of art and power even now are decayed. Where is the pride of Babylon ? Where is the splendor of Palmyra ? Where the glory of Thebes ? Where the monuments of the conquests of Alexander and of Cæsar ? Where are the beautiful productions of ancient art ? All, all, either wholly gone or sunk amidst vast ruins. Where are the monuments of the work of the ministry ? In the ransomed spirit ; in the sweet peace of a christian's dying bed ; in hearts transformed ; in virtues to bloom for ever ; in souls that are immortal ; in the glories of the resurrection ; in the crown incorruptible and unfading ;—by the river of life and amidst the splendors of heaven.

I state, as a fourth principle which is to guide in the choice of a profession in this land, that our liberty is to be preserved. It is to be done, as it has been gained, by the prevalence of sound morals, and general intelligence, and self-denying patriotism. It is to be done at all hazards, and by the best talent and blood in the land. The civil and religious liberty which we enjoy, and which the young men who are coming on the stage of action are soon to inherit, has cost some of the best blood that has flowed in human veins, and is the richest blessing which is now enjoyed in this world. We of this generation are availing ourselves of the self-denials and toils, the counsels, plans, and wisdom of all past times. The results of the best efforts of liberty are ours ; the results of the profoundest thoughts and plans of patriots and sages of all past times are concentrated in our constitution, and constitute the life-blood of our freedom.

There is not one of the ancient sages and heroes who has not contributed a part to our liberty; not an ancient lawgiver the results of whose profound plans are not with us. What time and talent and patriotism have been able in all past generations to achieve for men has been conferred on us, and is all concentrated here, and embalmed and embodied in our institutions.

It is not, therefore, merely a personal matter that this should be preserved and transmitted to future times. It is not merely to make our own land blessed and happy. All the world, all future times, have an interest in the preservation of our liberty. It belongs to the world. We have received it from the past to be perpetuated and transmitted unimpaired to future times and to distant lands. There is not a tribe of men so obscure that they have not an interest in the preservation of American freedom; nor will there be a generation in ages to come, no matter how remote the period, that will not be affected and influenced by the preservation of the principles of our liberty.

All that is valuable in that liberty, all that is precious in our institutions is soon to be committed to those who are about to make choice of a profession for life. The young men who now ponder this question will soon inherit all, an inheritance far more valuable than the most brilliant diadem which ever adorned the brow of royalty, or the proudest scepter which a monarch ever swayed. They will possess the lands and gold of their fathers; they will preside and instruct in our seminaries of science; they will sit down at our tables, and repose on our beds; they will traverse these hills and vales as their own; they will be seated on our benches of justice, and occupy the places of our senators, and deliberate in our halls of legislation; they will proclaim the truths of the gospel in our pulpits; they will be in possession of all the offices in the gift of the people. There is nothing in all this vast and rich land which will not be theirs. It is not to be regarded, therefore, as a matter of wonder that the public eye is turned with deep interest on the young men of this nation. The world is favorably disposed toward young men. It is *ready* to commit all into their hands. It asks only that they should show themselves worthy of the invaluable trust which is

about to be committed to them. And in order to this, the eye of public vigilance is on the principles and the conduct of every young man. There is an interest felt in him proportionate to the value of the great interests at stake. The character and the conduct of every young man is and should be known. Their respective claims to public confidence are gauged and recorded; and these inestimable benefits will be committed to them in proportions adapted to their talents, their attainments, and their moral worth. Probably there is not on earth a nation where the conduct of young men excites so deep solicitude as in our own; probably no where else is their character so accurately marked and understood; probably no where is there a public vigilance which so nearly resembles the all-seeing eye of God as that which exists in this land in regard to the conduct and character of young men. And this is as it should be. It indicates a state of public mind conscious of the high trust about to be confided to them; healthful in its action, and jealous of liberty. It is solicitude growing out of the deep feeling which pervades all this land that we have the richest inheritance of the world; and that it is to be transmitted unimpaired to future times and to distant lands.

Now it is to be a fixed principle in the choice of a profession, that this liberty is to be preserved. Every young man is to seek to place himself in a position where, in consistency with other duties, he may do most to transmit it to other times, and send it abroad to other lands. If eloquence is needed to defend it, they are to maintain its great principles in the senate chamber and in the halls of legislation. If the press is to preserve it, they are to control and direct the press. If learning is necessary, they are to qualify themselves to preside in our seminaries of learning, and are to be willing to instruct the humblest common school, that the principles of liberty may live in the lowest ranks of the people. And if it be needful that blood should be shed again, theirs is to flow like that of our fathers, freely as water, that the rich inheritance may be preserved. He fills up one of the highest obligations to God and to human rights; discharges one of the most sacred of all duties to society

and human happiness, who consecrate elevated talents and profound learning to the preservation of American freedom. Be it, therefore, a first and a fixed principle in the choice of a profession, that that liberty is to be preserved. You are to die,—to die freely,—on the field which our fathers fertilized with their blood, rather than to suffer a successful assault to be made on the principles of our civil and religious freedom. You are to make it one of the elementary principles and guides of life, that **LIBERTY**, the liberty of thought and speech; the liberty of opinion and of discussion; the liberty which is checked by nothing but the restraints of wholesome law; liberty in the church, liberty in the state; liberty in the pulpit and the liberty of the press; the liberty of man every where, is to be the grand purpose of the soul,—interwoven with all your plans; promoted with all your learning and talents; secured with whatever official influence you may ever have; and defended, if necessary, with your heart's blood.

5. A fifth principle is, that our religion is to be perpetuated. The religion of our fathers is to go with all their sons, and is to abide with them, and is to influence them. It is to spread all over our hills, and all through our vales, and is to plant schools, and colleges, and churches there. This land has been reserved by God as if to make a grand experiment, to show that man may be free, and that religion, unsupported by the state, can be preserved. On every part of this vast republic spires are to point to heaven to tell that this is the land of the Christian's God. If our brethren wander away from the land of schools and churches to the wilderness; if, when they go from the sound of the Sabbath bell, they forget the Sabbath, and the Bible, and the place of prayer; if, when they leave the place where their fathers sleep in their graves, they forget the religion which sustained and comforted them; our sons are to follow them into the wilderness, and remind them of the commands of God. If they go for gold, they are to be followed with the admonitions of heavenly wisdom, and to be recalled to virtue and to God. None of them are to be suffered to go to any fertile vale or prairie of the West without the institutions of the gospel; nor are they

to be suffered to construct a hamlet, or to establish a village, or to build a city, that shall be devoted to any other god than the God of our fathers. By all the self-denials of benevolence, by all the force of persuasion, by all the power of argument, by all the remembrances of the early days of the republic, they are to be persuaded to plant there the Rose of Sharon, and to make the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to blossom as the rose. And that young man who makes choice of a profession, is to make this one of the grand elements in that choice, that this whole nation, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, is to be imbued with the gospel of Christ. It is to spread every where ; and his talents are to contribute all they can be made to contribute to that end.

I suggest but one other principle which should guide in the choice of a profession, and on that there is not time to enlarge. It is, that this world is to be converted to God, and the christian faith. It is with reference to this, that the Society which I am now permitted to address has been formed. Amidst all the uncertainties of the future ; all that is dubious in regard to the revolutions and changes which are to take place on earth, this is fixed and settled. It is the *only* thing in the distant future in this world, on which the eye can repose without danger of mistake, for this has been fixed by the sure word of God's unchanging covenant and promise. Political sagacity can look but a little distance, and that only by uncertain conjecture, into future scenes. A thousand things which the keen eye of the Burkes and Cannings of the world cannot discover in the future, may modify anticipated changes, and render void the plans of the profoundest political sagacity. But no such unseen modifying causes can affect the predictions of him who has foretold the conversion of the world. He saw the end from the beginning. He saw all the revolutions of states and empires. He saw all the plans of statesmen ; he saw all the results of wars and revolutions ; and he has made it a matter of public record, that the period is to come when "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert blossom as the rose ;" when "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down

with the kid ; and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." In the divine purposes it is settled ; in the promises of the everlasting God it is fixed ; and the time shall arrive when

The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
 Shall
 Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
 From distant mountains catch the flying joy ;
 Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
 Earth rolls the rapturous Hosannah round.

The world is to be recovered to God. No matter how degraded it is ; no matter how polluted ; no matter how sunken ; all its lands of pollution and defilement are to be made as lovely as the "sweetest village that smiles on a Scottish or New England landscape." No matter what it may cost ; the purposes of God are to be fulfilled. No matter how many of our young men are to go forth, consecrated to this work, the nation must be willing that they should go and lay their bones in the banks of the Senegal or the Ganges ; in burning sands or amid the snows of the north. No matter how many fall as martyrs, their places are to be supplied. If other Lymans and Munsuns are to fall by the hand of violence, Amherst and other colleges are to send forth those who will hail it as a privilege to tread in their steps, and to die, if God so will it, as they died. Let the heathen world become full of martyrs, and every vale be filled with the rough stones that mark the graves of murdered missionaries, or with graves which not even the humblest monument shall point out to the passing traveler, still the world is to be converted to God ; and the work is to be pursued until the time shall come when even in those lands the same honor shall be rendered to the names of the murdered men which the world now cheerfully pays to the names of Ignatius and Polycarp, of Latimer and of Cranmer.

It is to be an elementary principle in the choice of a profession, that this world is to be converted to Jesus Christ. It is to form the basis on which that choice is to be made. It is to be one of the points which are assumed as true ; and to promote that object is yet to be one of the main purposes which is to influence young men in making that choice. Whatever is needful

for that is to be done ; whatever would retard that ; whatever would not in some way promote it, is to be deemed a course of life that is a departure from the divine purposes, and an object which lies out of the appropriate sphere of human effort. And the time will come at no distant period,—and should be now regarded as already come by every young man,—that no one has entirely correct views in the choice of his profession, who has not admitted it as an elementary and a leading principle in his choice, that all the miseries of men should be alleviated and will be alleviated by the prevalence of the gospel of Christ, and that his talents are to be consecrated in their appropriate sphere in augmenting human happiness ; in removing the evils of cruel laws, and degrading rites, and bloody institutions ; of ignorance, and superstition, and pollution throughout the entire world. Be it a fixed principle, that the light of truth, like that of a clear summer's morning, is yet to be diffused over all the darkened hills and vales of this world ; that the banner of salvation is to float in broad and ample folds, “all covered o'er with living light,” every where on earth ; and that, under the influence of well-directed effort, every pagan temple is yet to be left without a priest, and every pagan altar without a sacrifice.