

29

H

# Moral Courage:

A SERMON,

Delivered on Sabbath Evening, Oct. 26, 1856,

BEFORE THE

YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

OF PHILADELPHIA.

BY

HENRY A. BOARDMAN, D.D.

---

PHILADELPHIA:

PARRY AND M'MILLAN.

1856.

THE CITY OF BOSTON

1870

1

...

...

...

C. SHERMAN & SON, PRINTERS,  
19 St. James Street.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

---

PHILADELPHIA, November 4th, 1856.

REVEREND DR. BOARDMAN,

DEAR SIR:—Having derived much pleasure, and we trust profit, from the Sermon you delivered on the 26th ultimo, on “MORAL COURAGE,” we are anxious that its usefulness be not confined to the narrow circle of those who listened to it, but that an opportunity for its perusal be afforded to all the Young Men in our community. Aware that many had not the privilege of hearing it on account of the crowded state of the house, and believing that its publication would be calculated to accomplish much good, we earnestly request you to furnish us with a copy for that purpose.

We are, Dear Sir,

Yours, most respectfully,

GEORGE MACFARLANE,  
HENRY MONTGOMERY,  
JOHN WADDELL,  
WILLIAM MILLAR,  
WILLIAM M. BREMER,  
JAMES GWYN,  
JOHN WOOD,  
D. W. DENISON,  
JAMES W. AUGHILTREE,  
JAMES GRANT,  
JOHN PATTERSON,  
GEO. HUGHES,  
JAMES S. MARTIN,  
THOMAS GOSS,  
WILLIAM D. STUART,  
JAS. GRAHAM, JR.

[REPLY.]

PHILADELPHIA, November 6th, 1856.

GENTLEMEN:

The Sermon which I recently preached, by invitation of the "YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION," was written without the slightest reference to publication. My own feeling about it is, that the discussion of the subject is quite incomplete, and I would not, of *choice*, send it to the press. But I will not, on this account, refuse the request with which you have honored me, enforced as it is by the conviction you express, that the discourse is adapted to do good among Young Men. The manuscript is herewith placed in your hands.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Sincerely and faithfully yours,

HENRY A. BOARDMAN.

To Messrs. GEORGE MACFARLANE,  
HENRY MONTGOMERY, and others.

## S E R M O N.

---

DANIEL 3 : 16-18.

“SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO ANSWERED AND SAID TO THE KING, O NEBUCHADNEZZAR, WE ARE NOT CAREFUL TO ANSWER THEE IN THIS MATTER. IF IT BE SO, OUR GOD, WHOM WE SERVE, IS ABLE TO DELIVER US FROM THE BURNING FIERY FURNACE, AND HE WILL DELIVER US OUT OF THINE HAND, O KING. BUT IF NOT, BE IT KNOWN UNTO THEE, O KING, THAT WE WILL NOT SERVE THY GODS, NOR WORSHIP THE GOLDEN IMAGE WHICH THOU HAST SET UP.”

THE three young men here mentioned, were Jews, who had been carried to Babylon at the overthrow of Jerusalem. Under the direction of the king, they were thoroughly educated, and, like Daniel, their fellow-captive and friend, were then promoted to stations of great honor and influence. They were charged, indeed, with a trust of no less magnitude than the civil administration of the province of Babylon. This excited the envy and hostility of the nobles. Nebuchadnezzar having set up a colossal brazen idol in the vicinity of the city, and issued a decree that all his subjects should worship it, under penalty of being cast into a “burning fiery furnace,” it



was reported to him, that these three Jews, among the most conspicuous of his own functionaries, had refused to pay homage to the image. Enraged at their presumption, he summoned them to his presence, and thus addressed them:—"Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now, if ye be ready, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" Their answer was promptly given in the words of the text. The sequel of the narrative is familiar to every reader of the Bible. They were thrown into the furnace and came out uninjured. Whereupon the king issued a decree requiring all his subjects to reverence the God they worshipped.

This transaction supplies us with one of the most striking examples of MORAL COURAGE to be found on record. There is everything in the circumstances of the case and in the relations of the parties, to heighten its impression. On one side, we behold the most powerful monarch of the age, whose word was law throughout every part of his empire; and on the other, three young foreigners, his captives, whom he had generously educated and raised to

situations of honor and emolument. On one of the most imposing occasions which could occur even in the history of such a monarchy, the inauguration of a new and costly idol, in the presence of the entire magistracy and aristocracy of the realm, he issues a specific order to them, to fall down with the multitude and worship his statue. Their previous disobedience to the general decree, and this personal repetition of the order by their sovereign, must have been known abroad; and we may reasonably presume that it was a question which excited intense curiosity among the vast throng now assembled at Babylon, whether they would again have the temerity to set his authority at defiance. Among all this crowd, there was not an individual who could afford them the slightest protection; not one, who, even if disposed to interfere in their behalf, could have done so without sacrificing his own life. Never, perhaps, were men placed in more trying circumstances: never did men acquit themselves more nobly. In the face of an infuriated autocrat, an exasperated nation, and a burning, fiery furnace, they announced their decision as promptly and as calmly as though the question had been one of a common-place character. Expressing their unshaken reliance upon the faithfulness of the God they served, and His power to deliver them if He should see fit, they said, "Be it known unto thee, O King, that we *will not serve* thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Sublime words! worthy to be



held in remembrance by all who can appreciate real heroism; worthy to be written upon the hearts of all who aspire after true dignity and independence of character. Let us dwell for a little on that MORAL COURAGE of which we have here so impressive an illustration.

The nature of this endowment is well understood. It is the principle which prompts a man *to perform his duty*, leaving the consequences with God. It is not mere courage, a quality which is as frequently found in brutes as in men, but *moral* courage; courage which has to do with morality in its essential principle, and with moral questions in its exercise. Courage often subsists without it. Many a man has accepted a challenge to fight a duel, because he had not the moral courage to refuse it. Many have marched to the assault of a battery, sword in hand, who would have fled from the mouth of the fiery furnace, and prostrated themselves before Nebuchadnezzar's image.

It would be erroneous to say, that this quality can exist only in connection with true piety. There are some sublime examples of it to be found in the annals of pagan antiquity. The case of Regulus will occur to you as one of pre-eminent interest. This extraordinary man having been taken prisoner by the Carthaginians, was despatched by them to Rome, with an embassy charged to negotiate a peace. He had pledged his word that, if the embassy failed in their object, he would return. Arrived at Rome,



instead of advocating a peace, he exerted all his influence with his countrymen to prevent it; and he succeeded. He well knew that if he went back to Carthage after this, a more rigorous imprisonment, and probably a cruel death, awaited him. He was now in Rome, far beyond the reach of the Carthaginians. His wife and children earnestly and with tears besought him to remain. But *his word had been passed*, that if the war went on, he would return. And in the strength of what would seem to have been a superhuman energy, he tore himself away from his family and country, and went back to his enemies to meet the terrible doom his friends had predicted for him.

There is something wonderful in this; something not only to awaken our admiration, but which might profitably exercise the ingenuity of Christian casuists. I stop not to analyze it; and have only to observe respecting it, that there is an obligation resting upon us all, to cultivate that firmness and lofty independence of mind, which distinguished this noble Roman.\*

Without disparaging examples of this kind, we may be allowed to insist, that MORAL COURAGE can exist in its highest form, only when it rests on the impregnable basis of true religion. It is the legitimate effect of religion

\* One can hardly suppress a feeling of regret, that the researches of Niebuhr should have drawn the received account of Regulus into some discredit.

to make men intrepid in the discharge of duty. A timid, vacillating, or fitful course of conduct, always proceeds from some defect of character; and whether this defect be in the understanding, the heart, or the conscience, a cordial reception of the *Gospel of Christ* is the best corrective of it. Not only does religion contribute to harmonize the various intellectual and moral powers, restraining each within its appropriate province, and combining them in due symmetry; but it implants in the breast rational and solid *principles*, and tends to form a strong and vigorous character.

The Gospel and the world are at mortal enmity with each other. They are struggling together in the bosom of every renewed man. According as the Gospel gains the ascendancy, will the man be withdrawn from the control of mere sensual and earthly aims, and brought under the influence of those higher and better motives which give steadiness to the character and consistency to the life. Faith, that divine principle which the world can so little appreciate, makes of every man who receives it, a new man. He is no longer "of the world." He has done walking by sight. His horizon has suddenly expanded, until, from being restricted to the present life, it comprehends eternity. This earth has ceased to be the universe to him. The ideas of God, and heaven and hell, of moral accountability and retributive justice, which had floated vaguely before his imagination, have assumed form and substance.



Where he once saw nothing but undefined and shadowy creations, there is spread out before him a panorama as broad as eternity, replenished with objects the most sublime and imposing of which a finite mind can conceive, and irradiated with the splendors which emanate from the sapphire throne.

It is impossible that he should now take the same grovelling views of himself, his relations, and his duties, to which he has been accustomed ; or that he should continue to act from the same motives. Just in proportion to the vigor of his faith, will he be raised above the influence of all sordid considerations. Not to advert to other particulars, it is evident that such a man will have a deep and earnest sense of *duty* ; that he will not only recognize his obligation to do right, but will, from the love of right and truth, steadfastly endeavor to do whatever God may require at his hands. Whether a certain course may conduce to his temporal interests ; whether there are dangers or difficulties in the way ; whether his conduct will be approved by all whose favorable opinion he values : these and similar questions will not long embarrass him. He has a Master to serve, a duty to discharge, irrespective of all considerations of mere convenience, popularity, or even personal safety.

Not that any man is called upon either to spurn the counsel of friends, or to rush madly into danger. There is a great deal of spurious independence in the world—in



dependence which springs from pride, from obstinacy, from recklessness, from a pitiful love of singularity, and other unworthy sources. But the heroism commended to us in the Scriptures, both by precept and example, while it has no affinity with these elements, has an inflexible reverence for the *will of God*. Its principle is, "We ought to obey God rather than man." It sustained Noah in building the ark. It made Joshua exclaim: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." It nerved Jeremiah to denounce the judgments of God against his oppressors. It carried the three Jews into the furnace and Daniel into the lions' den. And it drew from Paul that noble confession, "The Holy Ghost witnesseth that in every city bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God."

*This* is the temper which it behooves us to cherish—the courage which dares TO DO ITS DUTY under all circumstances, and which looks not to man but to God for its reward. Founded as it is upon Christian principle, it is, in its better manifestations, combined with the other Christian graces. When we hear of "courage," we are apt to think of a character that is somewhat harsh and violent; and these attributes may certainly coexist even with that admirable endowment of which I am speaking.

But they are so far from being of its essential elements, that they uniformly detract from its real worth. Nothing is more remarkable in the conduct of these three young Jews than their modesty. Their reply to the King is a model of blended humility and firmness. History presents no finer model. There is no blustering, no ostentatious proclamation of their creed or their readiness to suffer for it, no effort either to awaken sympathy or to insult their royal persecutor. They announce in the simplest words, their determination not to comply with the imperial edict. And this calm dignity is the proper concomitant of true heroism. "It vaunteth not itself and is not puffed up." It is neither clamorous nor dictatorial. It is the little heroes who boast much; great ones can afford to let their works praise them. The twittering swallow that skims the surface of the earth and bolts the insects for his evening repast, makes far more ado over his achievements than the eagle who seizes a lamb with his huge talons and soars away with it on majestic wing to his lofty eyrie. Both have their archetypes. There are men whose twitter is as constant as the swallow's; and over achievements perhaps of the same relative calibre; men who are constantly crying with Jehu, "Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord." And there are others whose lives are read, not in the jubilation of their own trumpets, but in the track of light which marks their footsteps. The image suggested by the spectacle of a truly great mind contending with



difficulties in the meek and lofty spirit of these Jews, is that of a massive and polished machine, which moves with tranquil dignity and strength, unimpeded by obstacles and never swerving from its prescribed sphere.

It is not given to all to attain this indomitable energy of will. Some characters have much more of it than others, by nature; and some are placed in circumstances peculiarly favorable to its development. But it is worthy of note, that it is found as often in the weaker as in the stronger sex. In every age of persecution, women have been quite as ready to seal their testimony with their blood as men. The annals of modern Missions present us with numerous examples of Christian females who have displayed the most heroic fortitude in circumstances of the greatest danger. It will suffice, by way of illustration, to mention a single one, the first Mrs. Judson—a name which can never lose its fragrance until eminent piety and self-denying labors and sacrifices cease to command the veneration of the Church. And if we restrict our view to the scenes of every-day life, the moral courage which puts one upon a straightforward discharge of duty in all situations and relations, is quite as frequently combined with feminine delicacy and gentleness as with the sterner virtues of the other sex.

“Every-day life” has just been adverted to, and it is in this sphere that *we* are called upon to exemplify the virtues of which we are speaking. It is not very pro-



bable that any of us will be subjected to the terrors of martyrdom, but there can be no individual here who will not have frequent occasion for the exercise of firmness, independence, and moral courage. The want of these qualities may be seen on every side—among individuals of all grades and professions.

There are, for example, people who can scarcely be said to have any character. They have no fixed principles, no energy, no self-control. They are open to all sorts of impressions, and are carried about now in this direction, now in that, like a fillet of thistle-down in the air. For the most part they are no less indolent than passive. With too little resolution to address themselves vigorously to any rational employment, either physical or intellectual, we may almost say of them what Fuller, the quaint historian, says of Almerick, the idle king of Jerusalem, that “his hands were lazier than those that are printed in the margin of a book to point what others should read.” It would be quite a work of supererogation to discuss the question, how far people of this description are deficient in moral courage.

There are others who are famous for their *indecision*; who never know their own mind, or whether they have any mind. The most ordinary questions of duty perplex them; and they must needs go out and canvass a whole neighborhood, to decide matters strictly personal to themselves. Innumerable schemes are projected and partially

filled up, while a very few only are consummated. If their lives could be topographically delineated, they would resemble those maps of India which are dotted over with ruined temples in all stages of progression from a mere foundation up to entire completion—it being a principle with the Hindoos, never to finish a temple begun by a predecessor. It would be unjust, however, to these unfortunates to allege that they are necessarily deficient in moral courage. Some persons of this description have shed their blood for the truth, and we cannot affirm of any one in particular among them, that he would not have stood by the three Jews at Babylon and gone with them, for the truth's sake, into the fiery furnace. Still it must be seen, that in the main, they are sadly deficient in real firmness and independence; and that their characters and their comfort would be greatly improved by a liberal infusion of these qualities.

Again, the moral courage inculcated in the text, is opposed to all *chicanery and craft*. These are not its specific antagonist vices, but they are incompatible with it; for it involves not only independence and energy, but energy and independence in *doing right*. Every community is infested with characters who are deformed with these propensities; men who suspect trickery in others, and habitually practice it themselves; who, oftentimes, when a straight and a crooked way lead to the same end, by the force of a fatal instinct, choose the crooked one, as



though, like the serpent, they *could* not go straight. Nothing could be further removed from these defects, than that lofty independence we are considering. The individual who is under the control of this principle, can have no fellowship with these or any other of the “unfruitful works of darkness.” He abhors all equivocation and dissimulation. He makes no concealment of his opinions, where people have a right to know them. He scorns to take advantage of the ignorance or the helplessness of others. Without shrinking from an honorable competition, he will use no unworthy expedients to injure the reputation or the business of a professional rival. He has the courage to do whatever duty may demand; but he has not the courage to invade either the prerogatives of the Deity, or the rights of his fellow-creatures.

And this leads me to advert to another characteristic no less at variance with the principle we are considering, viz., *a passion for popularity, or an inordinate subserviency to the opinions of the world.*

These are the two standards between which mankind are divided, the law of God, and the opinions of the world. One man always asks, “What is the will of God?” Another always asks, “What will the world say?” And according as they follow one or the other of these guides, men are Christian freemen, or the slaves of expediency. Suppose the three Jews had asked, “What will the world say?” Suppose Peter had asked it, when he stood before



the Council? Or Huss and Jerome at Constance? Or Luther, when he nailed his theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg? Who does not see, that this sordid sentiment must be fatal to all progress in virtue and piety, both for individuals and for the Church; that every beneficent reform which has marked the career of Christianity, has been effected in the face of the world's opinions and passions; and that to invest the world with jurisdiction over faith and morals, would be to bring back mankind to the superstitions, the stolidity, and the multifarious corruptions of the dark ages? What is the world to me, or what am I to the world, that I should look to it to decide questions of duty for me? I must, indeed, consider the consequences of my conduct as regards the world. I must, to the extent of my ability, seek the world's good, and do what I can to improve the condition of my race, and enlarge the common stock of happiness. But what has the world to do with settling a question of duty for me? Duty respects a law, and law a Lawgiver. My *duty* is to God. All duty is to God. My duty to my fellow-men, to myself, to the brute creation, in so far as I have to do with them, is all resolvable into duty to God. And to allow a servile deference to the world to control me in my opinions or conduct, is to dethrone the Deity from my heart, and put the world in His place.

It must be apparent, too, that the man who sacrifices his independence to this irrational deference for the world's

opinions and usages, can have no abiding peace of mind. When he puts his duty in the custody of the world, he puts his happiness there also; and in the perplexity and anxiety which ensue, he suffers the just penalty of this folly and presumption.

The concession must, unhappily, be made, that the Church is not exempt from an inordinate desire to conciliate popular favor and applause. Much of the zeal, it is to be feared, which displays itself in a bustling and really useful activity about good objects, is more or less tainted with a subtle craving after notoriety. Little as they themselves may suspect it, Christian professors would sometimes discover, if they could see themselves, even as others see them, not to say as Omniscience sees them, that the principal motive which animates some of their most imposing actions, is a desire to be *seen* of men. Take them out of the conspicuous and stirring scenes in which Providence has placed them; conduct them where there would be no partial friends to chronicle and applaud their achievements; throw them, as many a devoted missionary has been thrown, upon a sense of duty and the honor which cometh from God, as their incentives to exertion; and how you would clip the wings of their zeal, and dwarf them down into commonplace Christians. Yet this is a test which we ought to be able to bear. It is a test which every one who possesses real independence and moral heroism in an exalted degree, would bear.



Do not understand me as saying, that society requires us to be indifferent to the commendation of our fellow-creatures; that it crushes the genial sympathies of humanity, and transforms men into Stoics. People of this type are rather to be pitied than emulated—people who have purposely allowed their feelings to become so petrified, that they would have thought it a weakness to weep with Mary at the sepulchre, and with Mary's Lord at the grave of Lazarus. These are rather anatomies than men and women—walking *automata*, who have the form and aspect and locomotive powers of humanity, but not its informing, sensitive soul. The religion they have imbibed, if they have imbibed any, is that of Simon, the Stylite, or that of the miserable fanatics who hope to propitiate the Deity by wearing hempen shirts, and sleeping on the stone floor of a cell. Widely differing as these characters do in the measure and the manifestations of their fanaticism, it is fanaticism which possesses them all: and the pregnant question which might be put to them all is, "Who hath required this at your hands?" But while we say this, we leave intact the doctrine, that as the will of God is our only authorized rule of duty, so His approbation should be our predominant motive to duty; and just in proportion as we are emancipated from a morbid hankering after the praise of men, shall we feel the sufficiency and the comfort of His favor as an incentive to firmness and constancy in His service.



No one can doubt that the conduct of those young men at the court of Babylon would have been the same, had the same test been proposed to them with the same penalty in the obscurest corner of that empire. The faith which sustained them was not derived from the world, nor was it sustained by the world. It drew both its being and its nourishment from quite another source; and would have operated with the same sublime efficiency in any other circumstances as in those in which it was put to the trial. And although our situation is as unlike theirs as possible, we are in real need of the courage and independence which actuated them. There is a perpetual proneness in the heart to rely too much upon the world; a sinful longing for its favor, a sinful dread of its frown, and a too facile subserviency to its opinions and usages. We may all profit by the apostle's caution, "Be not ye the *servants of men.*" And we shall never fill up the measure of our duty, nor derive from our religion the solid satisfaction it is adapted to impart, until we learn from experience what this precept means.

An extreme complaisance to the opinions of the world, as opposed to true independence of character, is especially to be deprecated in men holding official stations or exercising the functions of public teachers. It has often made Christian ministers suppress offensive doctrines and precepts, and led them to gloss over the vices of the great, and to cry peace, where God had said there was no peace.

It has impelled legislators to advocate measures which in their hearts they disapproved, and to oppose enactments which they were secretly persuaded would be for the public good. Even the Bench has not been undefiled in this matter. It requires no small degree of firmness to enforce obnoxious laws ; and the impending displeasure of the populace has extorted from many a magistrate, decisions which cost him bitter reproaches of conscience. Here, indeed, beyond almost any other situation, moral courage, combined with integrity, is of unspeakable value ; and it is a public calamity when any man is raised to the Bench who, whether from constitutional timidity, party affinities, sordid propensities, or other cause, is deficient in this quality. The liberties of a people are no longer safe, whatever their written charters and statutes, when Justice ceases to be administered by men, who, to competent talents and professional culture, add unspotted probity and invincible courage. And it is no trivial advantage which jurists and magistrates might derive from the systematic study of the BIBLE, that they would find there so much, in the way both of precept and of example, to fortify them against all sinister influences, and to aid them in holding the scales of Justice under all circumstances with an even and inflexible hand.

The same lesson is needful to all who embark in *politics*, for there is very much in mere partisanship that is hostile to the virtues on which we are meditating. It is certainly



possible for a pure man to be a politician, and to be frank, fearless, and consistent in the discharge of his duty. But it is no breach of charity to say that where one succeeds in this, many fail. It is a severe trial of a man's principles (to say nothing of his temper) to mix him up in a crowd, and especially to consolidate him with a party. Men, in this situation, like the rank and file in the armies of despotic sovereigns, lose their individuality, and not unfrequently sanction measures at which, in their personal capacity, they would revolt.

It is no sufficient answer to this to say, that "unless a man moves with his party, he will be left behind." The tyranny of party is one of the worst of all tyrannies, and just as bad in a republic as under a monarchy: for a monster loses nothing of his ferocity by multiplying his heads. But this will not justify a man in bartering his liberty of opinion and conduct for political rewards. No man has a *right* to sell himself "for good or for evil," "for right or for wrong," to a party, a corporation, a sovereign, or any other master. He may do nothing in contravention of the allegiance he owes to God. His loyalty to HIM must be maintained at all hazards; and will be, if he is a man of true Christian integrity and energy. Men of this description *are* sometimes "left behind;" but their firmness and consistency inspire a respect which overrides all the machinery of party, if it does not even attach the multitude the more heartily to leaders who are felt to be



worthy of their confidence. There is, it is obvious, one great advantage, even in a temporal view, which such men possess over politicians who are governed wholly by expediency. I refer to the steadiness and uniformity which will ordinarily mark the career of a man who is guided by sound moral principle, and allows himself neither to be seduced from the path of rectitude by the enticements of ease, nor driven from it by danger. Between the course of such a man and that of one who suffers other people to frame his opinions and shape his conduct, who will truckle to the mob for their suffrages, and espouse any side of any question which may promise to bring him the greatest number of votes, there will, after a while, be the same difference that there is in the relative progress of two ships which weigh anchor together, one of which lays her course, and is kept to it with a firm helm, while the other is tossed about wherever the wind and the waves may carry her.

Even on the low ground of ambition, a man who is just setting out in the public service might employ himself wisely for a few hours in developing the thesis, "Energy of character, guided by incorruptible moral principle, as a means of success in life." History would come to his help with a noble army of witnesses. And if she should also reveal to him many who, although equipped with this celestial panoply, had failed to secure the honors at which they aimed, he would discover that, unlike the throng

of repudiated time-servers consigned to a premature obscurity, their disappointment had not soured their tempers, nor disturbed their peace of mind, nor robbed them of any of those resources from which they derived their happiness. You may, any of you, miss the temporal advantages for which you are striving; but if you are wise men you will see to it that the disaster is not aggravated by a loss of character also. A rigid adherence to truth, an honest and fearless discharge of duty, in the fear and strength of God, and for his glory, will shield you from this terrible catastrophe. The end to be attained is well worth all the care and time it might demand; and it is no trivial consideration, that in making the best possible preparation for your secular duties, you would be acquiring the only adequate preparation for death and eternity.

It is time to bring this protracted discourse to a close. I have touched in a very desultory way, upon a few of the points of a great subject. But it would be unwarrantable to conclude without urging upon all who are present, the importance of cultivating *true moral courage*. There is no class of persons who do not stand in need of this endowment, none who would not find frequent occasion for the exercise of it. But it is of such pre-eminent value to YOUNG MEN, that it may be allowed me to direct their special attention to it.

You are about entering, or have already entered, upon your several avocations. Whatever the sphere you may



have selected—whether some one of the mechanic arts, commerce, or a liberal profession—you are expecting, doubtless, either to make a fortune, or to win a chaplet, or both. But there is another thing to be done, which, even in a secular view, must be allowed to take precedence of these. You have, each of you, a *character to establish*; and this you must do for yourselves. Your parents cannot entail it. Friends cannot confer it. Gold cannot buy it. You must, under Providence, achieve it for yourselves. How this is to be done, it would exhaust my strength to tell, and your patience to hear. But waiving all other topics, MORAL COURAGE is both an essential ingredient in such a character as you should form, and one of the most effective implements in forming it. Let it be with you, then, a fundamental principle, always TO DO RIGHT. Let it be written upon your hearts, as with the point of a diamond, that you are never to shrink from an honest, temperate, unflinching discharge of your DUTY. Let this be the polar star towards which all your words and actions, all your plans and purposes shall converge. Let it preside over the daily routine of your counting-rooms, your offices, and your firesides;—over all your professional occupations and your social enjoyments;—a calm, intelligent, irrevocable determination, by the help of God, to DO YOUR DUTY.

Let this principle be securely lodged in your breasts, and it will be the nucleus of a character worth having. A whole cluster of virtues will crystallize around it. It



will supplant the effeminacy and instability of youth, and the vagrant tribes of infirmities and vices which wait upon worldly expediency, and are the common tenantry of every heart confided to its keeping. It will help to guard you against the temptations of life. These you very inadequately see as yet; but they lie athwart your paths, and sooner or later you will be among them—dense, thorny, wide-spread, as a forest of *chapperel*—a place of wounds, and sufferings, and, alas, of graves! for how many young men of high promise and buoyant hopes lie down to *die*, as to all honor or usefulness, when entangled by the seductions of the world.

Moral courage, too, will supply an incessant stimulus to wholesome activity. It will make you take hold of your studies, your merchandise, your handicraft, with a firm grasp. It will aid you in mastering difficulties, and subordinating to your own advantage the very hindrances which obstruct your progress. Nor will it fail to give you *power over others*. It is a law of our condition, that men endowed with firmness and independence shall have power over their fellow-men. This is true where these qualities are associated with flagrant vices, and prostituted to the worst purposes, as in the case of Alexander, of Cortez, and of Buonaparte. And it is certainly no less true, where they are animated by the spirit of Christianity and consecrated to the cause of human happiness. On all these grounds (and many others might be mentioned), the

culture of MORAL COURAGE may be earnestly commended to you as one of your most imperative duties.

If you ask, "How can it be attained?" the answer must be comprised in one or two sentences. We have gone over our subject to but little purpose, if it has not been made apparent, that true courage, in its best form, is a virtue which springs only from genuine religion. The shortest way, therefore, the *only* way to secure it is, *to give yourselves to the SAVIOUR*. Seek the indispensable assistance of the HOLY SPIRIT, and humbly and penitently receive CHRIST'S yoke upon you and learn of Him. Thus will you make your salvation sure; and HE will inspire you with the courage to combat all difficulties, and to glorify Him, if need be, even "in the fires."

Let me leave the lesson of the evening with you, enforced by a single illustrious example from modern history. Among the distinguished names which adorn the later annals of the race, few are pronounced with the reverence which attaches to that of JOHN HOWARD. I cite him the more readily in this connection, because his celebrity is to be ascribed, neither to the force of his original genius, nor to any signal advantages in his early training. His natural talents were no way remarkable; and his boyhood gave no presage of the proud career which awaited him. The Providence which allowed JOHN BUNYAN to be shut up in Bedford jail, that the world might not miss of



the "PILGRIM'S PROGRESS," permitted John Howard, when a young man, to be thrown into a French prison, that a pioneer might not be wanting to marshal and direct the sympathies of Christendom in renovating the prisons and hospitals of the world. To this service he consecrated his life. And he pursued it with an energy and an intrepidity, to which difficulties and dangers were but as fuel to the fire. Relinquishing to other men the common objects of ambition, he sought *his* triumphs in the convict's cell, and in the pestilential wards of the lazaretto. Again and again did he make the tour of Great Britain and the Continent, not to regale himself with the glories of nature and the achievements of art, but to explore the loathsome recesses of jails and bridewells; to sit down by their fever-stricken inmates, and soothe them with words of kindness and religious consolation; to expose to princes and cabinets, the hideous cruelties which were practised in their names throughout this prison-world; and to arouse the slumbering conscience of the nations, to the task of redressing these intolerable evils.

Europe, since Howard's day, has been swept with the storms of revolution. Ancient dynasties have been subverted, and new empires constructed out of their ruins. But the traces of his footsteps no social or political changes can obliterate. The paths he trod are still radiant with celestial light; and you may follow him to-day on his mission of mercy, from city to city, and from province



to province, through Western and through Eastern Europe, from the balmy South to the frozen North, until you find him in a remote city of Russia, lying down to die, the victim of a malignant disease contracted in a visit of humanity to a suffering stranger.

It is not in human nature that *you*, YOUNG MEN, should look upon a career like this unmoved. With a common impulse, you will accord to the memory of HOWARD that tribute of admiration which his character must elicit from every generous heart. But this is not enough. Every such example enhances the obligation which rests upon us, to "go and do likewise." You may not be called to take up the ministry of the great philanthropist, but you *are* required to carry into the several spheres to which Providence may have appointed you, the inviolable integrity and the lofty heroism by which he was distinguished. Could we suppose one tithe of the young men in this assembly to become imbued with his *moral courage*, and to live henceforward under the control of the motives which animated his conduct, it is not extravagant to say that the influence they might exert would, in time, tell upon the well-being of our whole country, and, peradventure, extend to distant climes and unborn generations.

May you all, like Howard, receive the baptism of the Spirit, follow him in so far as he followed CHRIST, and through the riches of Divine grace, obtain that crown of righteousness which fadeth not away.

