

1
Rev. L. Lawrence

53
L.C.

**MR. SPRAGUE'S
SABBATH SCHOOL
ADDRESS.**

AN

ADDRESS

DELIVERED

IN THE SOUTH DUTCH CHURCH,

ALBANY,

OCTOBER 6, 1829,

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE COUNTY SABBATH
SCHOOL UNION.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE,

Pastor of the 2d Presbyterian Congregation in Albany.

ALBANY:

PRINTED AT THE CHRISTIAN REGISTER OFFICE.

.....
1829.



ADDRESS

TO THE SUPERINTENDENTS AND TEACHERS OF THE
ALBANY COUNTY SABBATH SCHOOL UNION.

It is always a grateful employment to the christian, and especially to the christian minister, to cheer on the benevolent labors, of such as are disposed to be fellow-workers with him unto the kingdom of God. When, especially, he is permitted to meet those who are actively engaged in promoting the best interests of the rising generation, thus purifying the fountains of society, and guarding the hopes of the church, he can scarcely fail to greet them with intense interest. Though he never saw them before, yet, finding them on this hallowed ground, he can take them by the hand as brothers and sisters, not only extending to them his counsel and encouragement, but cordially welcoming them to partake of his joy.

I rejoice that these remarks admit of being applied to the occasion upon which we are assembled this afternoon. Though most of you whom I address as Superintendents and instructors of the Sabbath school are strangers to me, I rejoice that it is my privilege to meet you as fellow-helpers to the truth;—as laboring, though not in exactly the same way, yet for substantially the same end, with every faithful minister of Christ. And I shall have gained my purpose in the few remarks which I am to make, if I should be so happy as to impress you more deeply with a sense of duty, or spread before you any thing in the way of encouragement, or even stir up your minds by putting you in remembrance.

In presenting before you a brief outline of duty, permit me to say,

1. That *you should endeavor to gain a deep impression of the importance of the work in which you are engaged.*

In every enterprise in which men engage, it is necessary that they should have just views of its importance, in order to ensure a reasonable prospect of success: for if the object aimed at be really one of deep interest, and yet be regarded as of comparatively trifling interest, nothing is more certain than that the effort to obtain it, will be disproportioned to its importance, and will, therefore, probably, be to little or no purpose. If, for instance, you engage in the business of Sabbath school instruction, chiefly as a matter of amusement, or merely from an instinctive fondness for mingling with children, or from any consideration which does not involve a sense of the real importance of the object, it were in vain to expect that you should discharge, in the best manner, the duties of your station. You will never labor with that diligence, perseverance, fidelity, and humble dependence on God, which ought to characterize the Sabbath school teacher, unless you look at the object in its high and momentous bearings, not only upon the life that now is, but upon that which is to come.

Let me counsel you, then, my friends, to bear in mind that the institution with which you are connected, has for its grand object, the immortal interests of the young;—not merely their happiness and usefulness in the present life, but their future and everlasting salvation. And this object it is adapted to secure on a larger scale than any other institution which has ever blessed the world. But whether the immense benefits which it proffers are to be realized, depends almost entirely under God, upon those by whom it is conducted. By neglect of duty on their

part, its benign influence may be, in a great degree, or even completely, neutralized; and it is liable to such abuses, that, instead of being a fountain of life and salvation, it may diffuse an influence which shall wither every plant of righteousness, and be felt, wherever it operates, as the blast of moral death. Realize then, I entreat you, that you are wielding an engine of immense moral power; that you have not only a price put into your hands for gaining wisdom, but means put into your hands for imparting it, which involve tremendous responsibility. With such impressions of the importance of the Sabbath school, you cannot fail to address yourselves to your work with alacrity and zeal; and instead of regarding it as an employment for an idle hour, it will weigh upon you, as one of the most momentous objects, whatever the others may be, of your whole life.

2. After having gained a deep impression of the general importance of the work in which you are engaged, I would say, in the next place, *spare no pains to qualify yourselves for it, in the best possible manner.*

In order to ensure success in any department of instruction, it is essential that the person acting as a teacher should have a familiar acquaintance with the science in which he instructs; that he should have far more knowledge of it, than he actually communicates: otherwise, his instructions will be likely to discover, if not too much of "the letter," yet too little of "the spirit" of his subject; and he will be liable to frequent embarrassment from inquiries which the curiosity or the ingenuity of his pupils may suggest. Be it your object, then, my friends, not only to gain a general acquaintance with God's word, but to gain a thorough knowledge of every lesson in which you attempt to instruct. Study each lesson with a sincere desire, and with ear-

nest efforts, to ascertain the genuine mind of the Spirit; and if difficulties suggest themselves, avail yourselves of all the helps within your reach, especially of fervent prayer to the author of all spiritual illumination, for a solution of them. You will find much advantage from the use of a judicious commentary; though you should recollect that this is to be used, not as a substitute for your own reflection, but as a help to it. You should endeavor to understand not only the meaning of each particular chapter or verse, as insulated, towards which your attention may be directed, but you should also understand it in its connexion, and comprehend the general scope and design of the discourse to which it belongs.— In short, you should not rest satisfied, so long as you are ignorant of any thing which it is in your power to know, in respect to the portion of Scripture on which you are employed. In this way, to say nothing of the immense personal advantage you will derive from having your mind richly stored with divine truth, you will be thoroughly furnished for your arduous work; will be prepared to feed the lambs entrusted to you with knowledge and understanding; and will have the best reason to hope that your benevolent labors will be crowned with the blessing of God. If, on the other hand, you neglect the proper preparation for this exercise, and occupy the place of teachers, when you have need to be taught what are the first principles of the oracles of God. rely on it, there is little hope that the seed which *you* sow will ever germinate; or that your labors, however well intended, will accomplish, in any considerable degree, the great and godlike design of the institution.

3. Having made the best preparation in your power for meeting your class, let me counsel you, in the

third place, to *make it your grand object in imparting instruction, to cause your pupils to understand and to feel the truths which you communicate.*

An error against which you ought to be especially on your guard, is that of suffering those whom you instruct to pass with having learned their lessons merely by rote;—with having committed to memory mere words, without any knowledge of the sense which they convey. That the exercise of the memory is important, admits of no question; but the design of Sabbath school instruction, so far as the intellect is concerned, can only be very partially gained, unless, along with the culture of the memory, there be a corresponding attention paid to eliciting and strengthening the faculty of reflection. The great truths of Revelation which constitute the subject of instruction in the Sabbath school, are fitted, above any thing else, to furnish aliment to the mind, in its earliest as well as its most mature operations; and there is not a faculty of the soul, which, by being brought in proper contact with these truths, will not be quickened in its exercise, and in its developement. Endeavor then to impress it upon the minds of your pupils, that the words which they commit to memory are of little importance apart from the thoughts they are designed to convey; and that they ought to regard little as done to purpose, until they are able to state the truths contained in each lesson in their own language. I know it has been too often taken for granted that the faculty of reflection, is, in its developement, far behind the faculty of memory; and upon this principle, systems of education have been built, which have turned our children into parrots, instead of making them intelligent learners. But I rejoice that these false notions are, in a great degree, explo-

ded; and that the most popular systems of education at the present day, proceed upon the principle that a child is capable of reflecting, of comparing, of reasoning, as well as of remembering. Be assured *you* cannot lose sight of this principle, without blasting your own hopes of success in this field of labor.

That you may secure the important end of which I have here spoken—that of making your pupils understand the truths which you inculcate—let me suggest two directions.

The first is, *that your instructions should be communicated with the utmost plainness and simplicity.* It is not easy for one who has been little accustomed to familiar intercourse with children, to make suitable allowance, in imparting instruction, for the limited views and the feeble grasp of a child's understanding; and hence, no doubt, much otherwise good instruction, both in the family and the Sabbath school, is to a great extent, or altogether, lost. If you would speak to the understanding of a child, it is absolutely essential that you should speak in some measure *as a child*; else all that you say will be nothing more than a dead letter. Remember then, while you occupy the place of a Sabbath school teacher, that though there may be around you many a germ of noble intellect, which is destined to an indefinite and glorious expansion, yet the capacities with which you have to do, are only the capacities of children. Let your illustrations of truth all be accommodated, so far as possible, to their comprehension; and encourage them to be inquisitive on any points which they do not fully understand. Whatever degree of simplicity may characterize your instructions, no danger can result from it; but you may as well remain silent as to talk to them in a way which they cannot comprehend.

The other direction to which I referred, is, *that you should pay due respect to the order of divine truth; in other words, that you should let every truth occupy in your instructions, its proper place.* There are in religion, as in every other science, first principles, or fundamental truths, a knowledge of which is essential as the basis of all subsequent improvement. Now what I intend is, that these leading truths should first be proposed to the mind of a child; and that these should be followed by others in the order of nature, as the mind may be able to receive and digest them. The same truth when presented in its right connexion, may be easily understood, which, when exhibited *out* of that connexion, would be perfectly unintelligible. Begin then with that which is most simple; and as you advance, be careful to connect one thing with another; that thus the truths of God's word, as they are received into the mind, instead of remaining in an incoherent and chaotic state, may be arranged into a well proportioned and beautiful system. In communicating the truth in this way, you not only have the advantage of presenting it in its native attractions, but you greatly assist the memory also, by bringing into exercise with the best effect the principle of association; for the connexion between different parts of the great system of truth is so obvious, that the contemplation of one truth very naturally suggests another. It is to the observance of this rule especially that it is owing, that the attainments of some children in the knowledge of God's word, have been truly astonishing; and on the other hand, to the neglect of this rule is to be referred, in a great degree, the fact that many other children, of equal capacities, and in every other respect, of equal advantages, have made but a tardy and doubtful progress.

I am aware that there may seem to be a difficulty in the way of realizing this desirable end, from the fact that the child has his set lessons, which are to be a guide to the teacher in the recitation. But, if I mistake not, the difficulty is rather apparent than real. The set questions, it is taken for granted, are generally within the child's comprehension, and may all very properly be asked by the teacher, and answered by the pupil; but the teacher should recollect that the simple asking of these questions, constitutes but a small part of his duty, and that he is to connect with them in every case a greater or less amount of religious instruction. Here then is the opportunity afforded him for observing that order of divine truth of which I have spoken. Let him pass lightly over subjects relating to the deep things of God, which may seem to be connected with the lesson, and dwell chiefly upon those truths which, while they are more simple, are yet more fundamental in the christian system. And thus he may gradually conduct his pupils to an intelligent contemplation of all the doctrines of our holy religion.

But you have another object to gain in Sabbath school instruction, beside making your pupils theologians: You should labor not only that they may understand the truth, but *feel its power*. The former may exist without the latter; but if it does thus exist, it will aggravate, rather than prevent their final condemnation; for 'he that knoweth his Master's will and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.'

Endeavor, then, with a view to the attainment of this high end, to render your instruction, in the highest degree, *practical*. Let it be an object never to be lost sight of, that your pupils should realize that

the truths with which they are made acquainted, are something more than materials for mere speculation; that they themselves have a deep personal interest in them; and that in these truths is bound up their destiny for eternity. Endeavor to impress them with a deep sense of the character, the law, and the government of God, and of the relations which they sustain to him; of their own character as ruined and guilty sinners; of the provision for their recovery and salvation in the atonement of Christ; of the necessity of repentance, and faith, and holiness; and of the everlasting retributions of the righteous and the wicked in a future world. These and various other subjects connected with them, are, from time to time, to be brought home, not only to their understandings as matter for reflection, but to their hearts and consciences as matter of deep and solemn feeling; and the effect of this course of instruction is to be carefully watched, and every serious impression is to be followed up with counsels and exhortations fitted to render it deep and abiding. Rely on it, my friends, there is not a lesson which comes before you, which does not admit of being applied in this practical way; and whenever you neglect to make such an application, however faithful you may be in other respects, believe me, you only half discharge your duty.

4. But your duty towards your pupils does not terminate in the school: I observe, fourthly, that *you are to bear them on your hearts in the closet, and you are to follow them to the family, and are to exercise, so far as circumstances may require or warrant, a general guardianship over their moral and spiritual interests.*

You believe in the efficacy of prayer, and you be-

lieve that we are bound to acknowledge God in all our ways. Is it not then pre-eminently your duty, entrusted as you are, in a sense, with the eternal interests of these children, engaged as you are in giving a direction to the immortal mind, which it may not improbably retain during its whole existence—is it not pre-eminently your duty, I ask, to seek a divine blessing on all your exertions to imbue them with knowledge and piety; and is it not equally your duty to commend them daily to the enlightening, renewing, life-giving influences of God's Holy Spirit? Rely on it, if your closets do not testify to your sense of dependence on divine aid in the discharge of your duty, and to your earnest supplications for the salvation of the dear children committed to your care, you are not laboring as you ought to labor; and you have little reason to expect that your efforts, in this cause, will be owned of Him, who has the hearts of all in his hand.

But your duty extends beyond the closet to the family. You are to go, as opportunity may offer, as an affectionate friend and visitor, to the houses in which your pupils reside; to ascertain, so far as you can, their general deportment, that you may be the better prepared to adapt your counsels and instructions.—Such visits will serve, on the one hand, to increase the interest which you feel in your pupils, and on the other, to draw their affections more strongly towards you; thus giving you a more ready access both to their understandings and their hearts. And more than this—these visits may sometimes be rendered eminently subservient to the spiritual interests of the parents and other members of the family; may be the means of dissipating clouds of ignorance, or breaking up habits of vice, or for aught you can tell, of

saving souls from death and hiding a multitude of sins. So, in some instances, it actually has been; and what teacher that remembers it, can fail to regard this as an important part of his duty?

5. Once more: I have spoken, under the preceding article, of some duties which devolve upon you as teachers, which seem to take for granted that you have yourselves been taught of the Spirit; but *there may be those among you, perhaps, who, while you are engaged in this noble enterprise, are yet conscious that you have never felt the saving power of the truths which you are endeavoring to inculcate.* And what shall be done in *your case*? Shall you relinquish this high and sacred employment, and fold your arms, and resign yourselves to a state of inaction, congratulating yourselves that you have escaped the inconsistency of inculcating truths, whose influence you do not profess to feel? By no means. Rather manifest your regard for consistency, by yielding your hearts to the influence of these truths, and becoming new creatures in Christ Jesus. Though you are without true piety, God may indeed give effect to your instructions, and make you instrumental even in the salvation of your pupils; but the event in respect to yourselves will be, that if you remain in this condition, it were better for you never to have been born. We rejoice that you are disposed to enlist in this benevolent work; and the best wish we can form for you is, that this blessed gospel whose truths you are engaged in inculcating, may speedily prove to be the power of God in your own salvation.

Let me say one word in this connexion in respect to the influence which this employment ought to have upon those of you, *who are professedly the disciples of Christ.* It should be improved by you as an impor-

tant means of growth in grace. And if you are faithful in the discharge of your duty, it cannot otherwise be, than that your sanctification should thereby be rapidly advanced. Your employment brings you in constant contact with the truths of God's word. See to it that you study them with a humble, teachable, self-applying spirit. See to it that your duty to your pupils, whether in the school or out of it, be performed in reliance on God's grace, and from a regard to his glory. In this way, while you water others, you will yourselves also be watered. The same course of action by which you are promoting the immortal interests of your fellow creatures, will be instrumental of refining and exalting your own christian graces, and of adding lustre to your crown of glory.

I have already said enough, my friends, to show, what I doubt not your own experience has long since taught you, that the faithful discharge of your whole duty as Sabbath school Teachers, is no light matter; that the station which you hold is one involving deep responsibility, and demanding earnest and persevering efforts: let me now, before closing my remarks, suggest a few considerations to encourage you in this arduous work.

1. You are laboring for the promotion of the best interests of *your pupils*. How much the happiness of any individual in the present life, depends upon his being intelligent and virtuous, I need not stop to show: nor will any one of you, or of this audience, doubt, that the characters which we here form, must decide our destiny for eternity. Now, it were too much to say that every child that comes into the Sabbath school, is sure to become wise and good; but it is not too much to say that every such child is brought within the atmosphere of intelligence and

piety;—within the influence of counsels and instructions, which, if rightly improved, will render him respectable, useful and happy;—an influence which may reach onward beyond the world, to a state of intellectual and moral perfection which it has not entered the mind of man to conceive. In connexion with this, let it be remembered that many of these children have their lot cast in families which are nurseries of ignorance and vice; and that the same hand which brings them into the Sabbath school, rescues them from the most deplorable moral degradation.— And suppose one of these children, born in the dark haunts of ignorance or pollution, to be found out by some angel of mercy, and to be brought within the influence of Sabbath school instruction;—be it that it is one of these very children, before us, and that one of you is the very individual, who performed the act;—and suppose that this child listening to your pious instructions should early become imbued with the spirit of Christ, —suppose he should pass through the world, scattering blessings around him, and living in the confidence and affection of his fellow creatures;—suppose he should die in the triumph and transports of faith, and should go to join the general assembly and church of the first born, and should become a king and a priest unto God, and should advance onward through eternity, with the ever-brightening powers and the ever-increasing joys of a seraph:—And suppose, at some remote period of his existence, while the crown of life was upon his head, and the harp of glory in his hand, and the praise of Jesus upon his lips;—suppose his eye should glance backward to the hole of the pit from which he was digged, to the hand that rescued him, and the lips that counselled him, and the school in which he was

nursed into an heir of glory; and can you describe, can you conceive, the emotions that must be awakened by such a retrospect? And suppose as I have already intimated, it should be the privilege of any one of you to have been that benefactor; to behold that face which, under your own counsels and instructions, you once saw wet with tears of penitence, now beaming upon you the joy and the gratitude of a glorified immortal, I ask you with what emotions you would think then of your labors in this Sabbath school? I ask you which of all the sacrifices which you have ever made or ever can make in this cause, would not seem to you as less than nothing? Now then, I repeat, you do not know in any given case that all this will be realized; but that it *may* be you are assured, that it *will* be you are permitted to hope. I know that you desire the happiness of your fellow creatures: Say then, in what field you can labor with the promise of a richer harvest.

2. You are laboring for *your country*. Nothing is more common to us, than to be entertained with bright visions of our country's glory: And it is true, my friends, that the sun in his circuit through the heavens, does not shine upon so goodly a land as ours; not one upon which the God of nature, and the God of providence, and the God of grace, has so richly bestowed his gifts. But who does not know that of all uncertain things, the destiny of nations is one of the most uncertain; that in countries in which civilization, and learning, and refinement once shed their brightest beams, there reigns now and has reigned for ages, a darkness that can be felt? Who, especially, does not know that governments formed upon a similar model with our own, have generally had but a brief existence; and who that listens does not hear from the grave of republics, a voice both instruc-

tive and monitory ; pleading the cause of intelligence and virtue, and bidding us beware of ignorance and vice ? Yes, my friends, there are indeed in this land the elements of national greatness. There is here the germ of an influence which it is not too much to say, may be destined to control the world : but believe me, the whole truth is not told unless it be said that here also *may be* the elements of national ruin ; here *may be* the germ of another influence which is destined to convulse the world. In what way then are the destinies of our country to be guarded ; the permanence of her institutions to be secured ? Believe me, in no other way than by the diffusion of knowledge and virtue ; and he who labors for this, is in the best sense of the word, a patriot. And I congratulate you, and bless the master, that this is the great object of *your* labors. You are contributing most directly and efficiently to the stability of our republic ; and if she should ever be seen in the greatness and majesty of age, rely on it, your efforts will be among the means, under God, which will have contributed to her preservation. If I might speak out my mind to many an inflated politician, who professes to be ready to offer himself on the altar of his country's glory, I would counsel him to forsake his midnight cabals, and come in and take part with you in the far more patriotic employment of a Sabbath school Teacher ; and I would venture to add my opinion that one affectionate counsel, or one christian precept, spoken in a Sabbath school room to the ear of a little child, is more likely to subserve our country's interests, than many a vapouring speech, which is made in the hall of supreme legislation, and echoes from one end of the nation to the other.

3. You are laboring for *the church*. That the

church shall ultimately fill the world, is as certain as Jehovah's existence; for he who hath promised it is Almighty and unchangeable. But then this is to be accomplished by means: and now I ask what means seem better adapted to this end, than this which you are employing? But we are not left to form our conclusions on this subject from the nature of the case: no, blessed be God, we are permitted to appeal to facts, with the confidence of eye witnesses, for evidence that it is from the Sabbath school ranks that our churches are principally to look for their enlargement. We have all probability on our side in hoping, that many of these children whom you teach, will be taught also of the Lord; for how often has the infant tongue been loosed first in the Sabbath school to speak forth the Redeemer's praises; nay, how often has the Spirit of grace descended with power upon these nurseries for heaven, and caused that scene to be acted over again, in which the children in the temple shouted their infant hosannas to the Son of David! And how many are there at this moment in the church, ornaments of the church, pillars of the church,—who, but for the Sabbath school, would not have cared whether there were a church or a Saviour. Who then can doubt that you are contributing directly to replenish and to increase the ranks of the people of God? Nay, who, with his eyes open, can doubt that, if the church is ever to look forth, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners, she is to gather much that is beautiful on the one hand, and terrible on the other, from this institution whose anniversary we celebrate!

There is another consideration connected with this which must not be omitted: Where is the church to

look for her ministers? I answer unhesitatingly, chiefly to the Sabbath school. The exigencies of the times require that the number of ministers should be greatly increased; and here begins that provision which God in his providence has made for meeting those exigencies. There is many a laborer now in the vineyard; there is many a pious youth in the course of preparation for the ministry, whose mind first received a religious direction in the Sabbath school: and no doubt of the great multitude who are hereafter to go abroad among the nations, publishing the glad tidings of salvation, far the larger part will have begun their preparation for this high enterprise under Sabbath school instruction. Truly, my friends, yours is a labor of love. In behalf of the church, the whole church, I bid you God-speed in your benevolent labors, while I exhort you not to be weary in well doing.

4. You are laboring for *posterity*. One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but no generation passes till it has done much towards forming the character of that which is to succeed it. It is the ordinance of heaven that the virtues and the vices of men should be propagated from age to age; that we should live in the habits, the actions, the very thoughts, of those who come after us, from one generation to another; thus protracting our existence here beyond the brief period of human life, and securing to us a kind of earthly immortality. I say this is the ordinance of heaven; and it extends to every human being: no man is so obscure, none so insignificant, but that it reaches him: his actions, his words, his thoughts, tell, in a greater or less degree, upon the destinies not only of those around him, but of those who are to come after him; and he need not

be disappointed, notwithstanding all his fancied insignificance, if, in the day of retribution, some who had come into existence after he was dead should rise up, with thanksgivings on their lips, to call him blessed, or with flames on their tongues, to greet him as their destroyer.

If this be so, what think you, my friends, of the extent of that influence which your labors here are likely to exert? You mistake it if you suppose that that influence terminates in blessing the individuals who are the immediate objects of it: no, it reaches onward; and if you could look down the vista of a thousand years, that which now seems feeble and contracted, might appear strong as the mountain torrent, diffusive as the light of heaven. I can imagine that there may be in this very assemblage of children before me—a spectacle the most lovely and the most sublime—I can imagine that there may be some Wilberforce, whose spirit may kindle over the wrongs of suffering humanity, and burst forth with lightning-like energy, to electrify a whole nation into a sense of its duty, and ultimately to purify our land from one of its foulest abominations. I can imagine that there may be some Mrs. Hannah More, whose writings will do much to stamp a character upon the age in which she lives; whose praises ten thousand female tongues will delight to repeat; and whose name, to the end of time, will be associated with all that is noble in intellect, all that is sublime in piety, and all that is gentle and benign in the best forms of female character. I can imagine that there may be some Edwards, who will teach men how to bring order out of confusion, and light out of darkness, and to wield the very elements of the moral world. And if it *should* be so (and surely the supposition in-

volves nothing like a miracle) estimate, if you can, the amount of good which, in either case, will result in the process of ages, from the life of that individual. Will not the school in which that mind first received its right direction, ever be regarded as a fountain of life, whose waters were for the refreshment and healing of the world? And if, at the judgment, it should be given you to choose whether to have been a teacher of that favored class, or to have worn the brightest diadem on earth, would you not, think you, trample the laurels of earthly distinction under your feet, and grasp at the nobler honor of having turned many to righteousness?

I might go on to say that your labors have a tendency to promote the joy of angels: for what saith our Saviour? 'There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth:' and again 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you that in Heaven *their* angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven.' I might say too that you are laboring for God; for the extension of his kingdom; for the promotion of his glory; but I will not extend my remarks further, for I owe you an apology for having already extended them so far. I leave you, humbly imploring God's blessing to direct, to animate, and to crown your labors. I leave you, devoutly thanking God and you, in behalf of the parents of these children, in behalf of the city in which we dwell, in behalf of our common country, in behalf of the wise and good every where, that you have enlisted in this hallowed enterprise. Hear the master saying unto thee from the heaven of heavens, 'Be thou faithful unto the death—faithful in all thy relations—faithful as a disciple of Christ—and I will give thee a crown of life!'