

Words for the Young.

A SERMON PREACHED IN NEW ORLEANS, ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPT. 22D., 1867, BY REV. J. B. SMITH, M. D.

[Bro. Smith was one of the best educated colored men we have ever known, and we gladly publish this sermon,—the last he preached,—as a specimen of his preaching. It was of course prepared without any thought of its being printed. Ed. *National Baptist*.]

Let no man despise thy youth. . . . [12, 14. Neglect not the gift that is within thee. 1 Tim. iv.]

The period of youth is the glory of nature; and the healthy development of all the resources of strength deposited in our nature is the glory of youth. But prodigality of native energy is a besetting sin; the wasting of precious vigor in criminal pleasure is common among men. The grand means by which the highest beauty of men is defaced, their energies squandered, and their souls destroyed, is intemperance in eating, drinking, and sensual indulgence.

In the first place, *intemperance in the use of food* is a frightful source of disease, stupidity, death. Man must grow up harmoniously and industriously if he would rise to eminence, with simultaneous expansion in trunk, branch, and foliage, as a tree grows. The sap of immortal energy must circulate in every fibre. Two laws are manifest in the constitution of man, a due regard to which must conduce to our welfare. In the first place, in proportion as the physical nature of a man is healthily developed by suitable discipline, securing the greatest vigor of limb, and the greatest acuteness of sense, he will derive important aids to the intellectual and moral powers from the perfection of his outward frame. Secondly, by a delightful reaction the mind, in proportion as it is invigorated and beautified, gives strength and elegance to the body, and enlarges its sphere of action and enjoyment.

At Athens the gymnasia became temples of the Graces. They were not merely places of exercise for the young, (for whom I think such places ought to be provided,) but drew to their halls, porticoes, baths, and groves, the votaries of every art and science. The field of Olympia was to the Greeks the most sacred enclosure of the gods. The games therein practised, among other uses promoted manly education, by teaching that the body has its honors as well as the mind. "Without physical vigor the feeble flickerings of the mind are only a gilded halo hovering around decay."

A Pagan youth once said, that "he was greater, and born to greater things, than to be a servant to his body." Coleridge says, "Unless above himself, he can erect himself, how poor a thing is man." Newton and Michael Angelo afford splendid illustrations of prudent and temperate lives.

Intemperance and licentiousness involve eternal disgrace and ruin. In Paris there is a beautiful antique gem, which represents Bacchus as an ardent youth riding a panther at full leap. How strikingly this teaches that the spell-driven victim of intemperance rides in passionate and inhuman speed to ruin. "What rein can hold licentious wickedness, when down the hill he drives his fierce career?" Temptation is a common evil which the wise will resist; it is a flattering evil to which the foolish will succumb. When resisted, temptation is a blessing; when yielded to, a curse. In a path encompassed by such foes, filled with such perils as attend our probationary state, the warnings of Scripture are most pertinent.

The wise seaman is careful about his lead, log, and lookout, three guarantees of safety amid shoals and quicksands. He runs close-reefed in a gale, and has a sharp eye to every lurking ledge or lee shore. And such a navigator is comparatively safe, while he who slumbers during the watch, or hoists all sails in the tempest, is sure to be wrecked. The strand of life's sea is strewn with the mutilated thousands who have perished in the whirlpools and on the murderous reefs of temptation. Says the wise preacher, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

In ancient times the gate or grand entrance of the city was the place of counsel and judgment, as well as strength. Our senses are the chief avenues of evil, and they must be guarded well. "The path is smooth that leadeth to danger, but the traveller therein will not walk far without a fall." It is hard for the best man to say to what limit he will be tempted. If he put himself among Philistines he cannot expect to come forth unharmed. There are treacherous wretches in all ranks of society who delight in causing the pure to degrade themselves to the same mire wherein they are wallowing. But we should trust him in nothing who makes not a conscience of uprightness, and especially we should shrink with horror from those who designedly throw temptation in the way of the innocent. Those who would not a moment think of madly leaping from a high tower at once, may yet be persuaded to descend step by step. The French have a maxim full of important meaning: "It is the first wrong step that ruins." Little foxes spoil the vines; some passion not checked in the bud, some viper not crushed in the egg, some vicious scene revisited with increased delight; these are frequently the almost imperceptible sources of ruin, which increase their forces with alarming speed, and soon blast the faculties of the soul in irretrievable ruin.

"Faults in the life breed errors in the brain, And these reciprocally those again. The mind and conduct mutually imprint, And stamp their image on each other's mint." Self confidence always precedes destruction. "I can take care of myself," says the candidate for speedy and profound contempt. He who would escape danger must avoid the paths

that lead to it. He who would escape the woe connected with sin, must powerfully guard against treacherous temptation. The downward course of young men is generally commenced by aping the follies of the unworthy in language, life and dress, in forgetting the sentiment of the sagacious Lactantius, that he who imitates the bad, cannot be good. Since honest earnings cannot support extravagant habits, some dishonorable and dishonest policy is adopted to meet the demands of growing vice, and unavoidable disgrace succeeds. The gaming table, the drinking saloon, and the brothel,—what a waste of capacities powers is here, and what a withering of auspicious hopes.

Good and evil are placed before us free moral agents, as the objects of our affection and the formers of our character for time and eternity. Hercules stood between virtue and vice, solicited by both. So must we choose which we will follow. But it requires stern integrity and high moral courage to withstand the temptation of worldly policy. Our wills must be conformed to the high principles of immutable justice. Integrity is a lofty virtue, a prime element in every trustworthy character. A true man is moved neither by smiles nor frowns, neither by pecuniary gain nor personal obloquy to swerve from truth. He is actuated by the strictest law of verity, and therefore is the man to trust. True greatness does not consist so much in doing extraordinary things as in conducting ordinary affairs with a noble demeanor and from a right motive. The highest honor is forever attached to unswerving honesty. It is of the highest importance that we early learn to live in this world with steadfast perseverance in the path of uprightness; exemplifying that regularity of movement which alone gives assurance of a soul truly devoted to exalted aims. When a man is deemed uncertain as to his engagements, so much so that his disregard of every promise has become proverbial, it will not be strange if he forfeits all public confidence, and speedily sinks under the infamy he has deserved. It is the highest glory in a man to be the slave of his word. No one can be fickle and false in little matters, and yet remain influential and trustworthy in concerns of a higher range. Trifles make up existence, and we cannot maintain an honorable standing a single hour, if in those relations which involve the honor and welfare of others, we presume in the slightest degree to sport with the law of veracity. Losing confidence on this ground all is lost.

"Lands mortgaged, may return and more esteemed; But honesty once pawned is ne'er redeemed."

Idleness is another vice which must be carefully avoided. We have four hundred and fifty voluntary muscles made on purpose to be actively employed. Every one should have a noble object of pursuit and a disposition actively to press towards his elevated goal, in order to be either successful or happy.

Idleness was a criminal offence at Athens, and should be so regarded everywhere. The teeth and tongue are not to be kept constantly employed while the hands remain idle. All labor is honorable whether of the head or of the hands, and whoever affects to shun or despise it, is a simpleton. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread," is an eternal decree from which none can try to escape without involving the most fearful consequences to both soul and body. Labor is diversified according to the various wants of society. The wood-sawyer is just as important and may be equally honorable as the lawyer. Let no man despise his calling, and no man will despise him. Whoever contributes to the good of the commonwealth deserves well of the same. An honorable ambition or aspiration in a young man is commendable, but it is perfectly ridiculous to aspire to a position which he has not qualified himself to fill and does not intend to. He brings ridicule and contempt not only on himself, but on the position he assumes, or rather presumes to occupy.

Every thing is governed by fixed rules and laws. Knowledge and wealth are reached by the same processes to-day by which they ever were. Each man must learn his alphabet before he becomes a scholar; he must learn the laws which regulate trade before he can become a merchant. No man can become a preacher without having first studied theology, nor a physician until he has studied the science of physiology and anatomy. None of the higher grades of labor can be properly performed without a good knowledge of letters, a knowledge of at least the rudiments of education. The education of a man should be equal to the requirements of the position he holds or to which he aspires.

Aside from these considerations, education is indispensable to a proper development of the mind and the higher faculties of the soul. It is the imperative duty of every young man to cultivate his mind to the extent of his means and opportunities,—not merely when convenient, but at a sacrifice of care and comfort. Wisdom springs not from the ground, and knowledge grows not as the weeds. These blessings must be earnestly sought after and are only attained by laborious effort.

In addition to books, the whole volume of nature is open for our contemplation. You may not have the advantages of the schools, but from the benefits of these none may be debarred. Many of the ablest and best men have been self-made men. Give yourselves, as much as is possible, to reading, not of a light and trashy literature, as novels and the like, but to a careful perusal of books that impart practical instruction. In the language of Dr. Watts, "Consider the depth and difficulty of many truths and the flattering appearance of falsehood, whence arises an infinite variety of many dangers to which we are exposed in our judgment of things. Read with greediness those authors that treat of

the doctrine of prejudices, prepossessions and springs of error, on purpose to make the soul watchful on all sides, that it suffer itself as far as possible to be imposed upon by none of them." Take a wide survey, now and then, of the vast and unlimited regions of learning. Let your meditations run over the names of the sciences with their numerous branches, and the innumerable themes of knowledge, and then reflect how few you are acquainted with in any tolerable degree. Connect yourself with literary or debating societies whenever they may exist among you; and when they do not, organize them. Let questions on theology, law, politics, the trades, business, the arts and sciences, be introduced and frequently discussed in some form for mental improvement. I know of no better way for a young man to cultivate his mind.

Every thing in nature is a repository of learning from which you may profit. Observation leads to inquiry. Do not fail to exercise it well. Conversation is another means of improving the mind, but it must be ordered wisely and not foolishly. Waste not the time in trifles and impertinence, for "what a man sows that shall he also reap." "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Avoid vain babblings, loose talks, and vulgar jests at all times and places. Say nothing that your own judgment tells you is delicate or unchaste.

"Immodest words admit of no defence, For want of decency is want of sense."

To make conversation profitable we should think well before we speak, and discourse with persons and about things in such a manner as will enhance our knowledge of God, of ourselves and others, of the world and the things therein. Like the wise man, choose acceptable words. Make it a point to derive some information from every discourse or conversation you may hear. Do not envy those who may know more than you. Do not sneer at those who may know less than you. Rather try to emulate the first and encourage the latter. Above all, avoid ostentation and pretensions. Affect not to be wiser than you are, and be not ashamed to confess your ignorance, for

"If fools have ulcers, and their pride conceal them, They must have ulcers still; for none can heal them."

My purpose is to show that every young man is under a sacred obligation to make the most and best of the means and opportunities with which God has blessed him. His motto must be "Excelsior!" "higher, still higher!" Human progress, whether in the acquisition of knowledge or in the success of business, or in elevation to places of trust and power, must be preceded by integrity, industry and perseverance. Two things are demanded as preparations to success. The aspiring competitor in the race of life must early fix his eye in a specific direction, and then with unflinching steps must press constantly towards the chosen goal. The diligent pupil in the school of stern necessity is often the most successful competitor in the race of life. Perseverance is a radical principle in every truly great character.

That man is destined to be of little use to his race who fears to soar or is ashamed to toil. If your life is honorable, if your business is honorable, and if your aims are honorable, never despair of success. Dread not the storm of opposition, the winds of adversity or the tongue of calumny. A true man can work himself up faster in the world than any combinations of knaves can pull him down.

The Baptists of London.

One of the most significant "signs of the times" with regard to our own denomination, is the vitality of our London Baptist churches. It may not be generally known that our denomination during the last fifteen years has increased their sitting accommodation by sixty-one per cent. on those sittings already existing, which is double what the Independents have done, and more than three times what the Wesleyans have provided during the same period. The increase is still going on, and the number of new chapels now in hand, and those contemplated to provide for the increasing spiritual wants of this vast metropolis, is an evidence of the power for work being developed in our London churches.—*Freeman, Nov. 8th.*

Baptist Noel's Retirement.

We have Mr. Baptist Noel's authority for stating that his rumoured retirement from all pastoral labor is quite correct. He has announced to the church at John-street, that he means to retire from the pastorate next July, when he will have completed his seventieth year, "wishing them," he says, "to have the better ministrations of a younger man." We need not say that by many this news has been, and will be, received with great regret. Mr. Noel has filled the pulpit at John-street with such honour to his Master, with such acceptance to his people, and such spiritual good to those who have been brought to God by his means, that his retirement from his charge at any time would naturally be a source of much sorrow. Moreover, our honoured and Honourable brother's witness for a pure Gospel in opposition to the superstitions of the present day, has been such that the Church of Christ can ill spare his labours. Mr. Noel still looks hale and hearty, and has all those noble characteristics of mind and soul which attract all good men's hearts to his. May he be preserved to the Christian public for many years to come! Embalmed he will be always in the memories of thousands; and as long as the Baptist denomination exists, will his memory be cherished as blessed—blessed not only for what he has given

the Church of Christ, but also for what he has given up, for conscience sake. There are few men who live more in the hearts of the denomination than the pastor of John-street, who, as Mr. Spurgeon once aptly remarked, had so much of the loveable spirit of John the Apostle; and whatever may be the Divine Master's will concerning him, we are sure there is not a Christian brother in our body who will not pray for him "Long life and happiness."

Mr. SPURGEON, we are glad to announce, was able to preach twice on Sunday last, and his health has not suffered by the exertion. He has been spending the week in a quiet part of Surrey, and his retirement and exercise will, it is hoped, speedily restore him to his wonted health.

The RITUALISTS are getting bolder and more inelegant every day. We have frequently protested against their coarse declamations and vulgarisms, and ridiculed their monstrous absurdities. They are advancing by rapid strides into the most abhorrent forms of Popery. Their last new infamy consists of a defence of the murderers of the martyrs of the Reformation. The *Church Times* of last week denies the character of martyrs to those who were burnt at Smithfield. Latimer, Ridley, and others are compared to Fenians. The blood of the martyrs is, by God's providence, proverbially, the seed of the church; but taking into consideration the fruit of that seed—the eighty seven sects into which Protestant Christians are at present divided in England—the seed itself must have been of rather indifferent quality, otherwise God is made the author of confusion and not of peace. They were, argues this High Church paper, put to death solely for the breach of the law, hereby being punishable with death. The spirit of Popery in its days of devilry run riot animates the extreme Ritualists, whose insufferable arrogance in assuming themselves to be the "temple of the Lord" is only exceeded by their bigotry and intolerance.—16.

India.

The social difficulties that beset the confession of Christianity in India are especially apparent in the case of young converts. Scarcely a month passes without some incidents of domestic persecution which show how severe is the ordeal which must be undergone by those who forsake the faith of their fathers. The same influences are a great bar to the practical acceptance of those conclusions which a simply secular education would enforce; and the disposition to halt midway in a demoralising state of indecision, is far too common. "We are sometimes ready to wonder," says the Rev. Richard Stobert, a missionary of the Free Church, at Bombay, "that Hinduism, with all its absurd ceremonies and abominable customs, should retain any hold on the minds of the people of India, now that education is so general, and Christianity so widely known. Alongside of schools, and colleges, and churches, we see temples erected in honour of deities of whom it is a shame even to speak, and multitudes bowing down to images of a shape as hideous and revolting as the wildest imagination could picture. We learn, indeed, on inquiry, that thousands of these apparently deluded worshippers conform to the customs of a religion in which they have no longer any faith. But this only changes the feeling of wonder, without diminishing it. The chief reason, as every one knows, of the hold which Hinduism has on those even who have no faith in it, is its intimate connection with the details of daily life. For a Hindu to abandon his religion, is to break off numerous habits familiar from childhood, and to sever the ties of the dearest earthly relationships. Caste is the stronghold of Hinduism, and to break caste is indeed to lose father, mother, wife, sister, and lands. Many of the educated young men of Bombay are sincerely anxious to give up idolatry, but they find they cannot." Their position, as described to me the other day in conversation by one of themselves, is exactly this, that they do not know what to do. They have got rid of many superstitious observances; they have even established a religious service of their own—held every Sabbath evening—which they call a prayer-meeting. But even after having gone so far, their position is still one of compromise, and every day of their lives they are obliged to conform to customs which imply the confession that, in spite of all their reforms, they are idolaters still. The majority of the young reformers in Bengal have reconciled their consciences to this life of compromise, and the youths of Bombay are in great danger of following their example. Those again who are really in earnest cannot be satisfied while occupying such a false position. But then, on the other hand, to take the decisive step involves a sacrifice for which they are not prepared."

Some characteristic incidents of missionary life are brought together in a letter from the Rev. J. Lawrence, of the Baptist Mission at Monghyr. Describing a preaching tour he says:—"Accompanied by two native brethren, I have been to the annual mela at Caragola ghat. And on our way back we visited the larger villages and bazaars on the river's banks. The mela was large this year; we spent a week there, and we had three days' very hard work in addressing the crowds who came to our tent, from about seven a. m. till near six p. m., excepting an hour in the middle of the day, when we rested a little. The people generally listened in a friendly spirit; and the discussions which arose rather forwarded than hindered our object of making known Gospel truth. We adopted the plan of charging a pice for a tract, two pices for a single gospel, two annas for the four gospels bound together, and so on. By doing so we disposed of