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LETTERS TO YOUNG MEN.

The Reasonableness and Desirability
of Religion.

(Continued.)

Greatness and goodness are not means,
but ends ;

Hath he not always treasure, always
friends,

The great good man. Three treasures,
love and light,

And calm thoughts, regular as infant's
breath ;

And three firm friends, more sure than
day or night,

Himself, his maker and the angel,
Death.

—Coleridge.

Young men, I hate can't, and I do
not know exactly how to say what I
wish to say in this letter, but I desire
to talk to you rationally, on the sub-
ject of religion,

Now don't stop reading at the men-
tion of that word, but read the letter
through.

The fact is this is the most import-
ant letter I have undertaken to write
to you.

I know you I think very thorough-
ly.

Life looks so good to you, and you
are anticipating so much from it that
religion comes to you and comes over
you like a shadow. You associate it
with long faces, and prayer meetings
and psalm singing and dull sermons
and grave reproofs and stupidity.
Your companions are gay, and so are
you. Perhaps you make a jest of reli-
gion ; but deep down in your heart of
hearts you know you are not treating
religion fairly. You know perfectly
well that there is something in it for
you and that you must have it. You
know the hour will come when you
will specially need it. But you wish
to put it off and enjoy life first. This
results very much from the kind
of preaching you have always listened
to. You have been taught that human
life is all vanity, that those things
which so greatly delight you are vain
and sinful, that your great business in
this world is to be saved, and that you
can only be saved by learning to de-
spise things that you love, and to love
things that you despise.

You feel that this is unnatural and
irrational—I think it is myself.

Now let me talk to you.

Go with me, if you please, to the
next station house, and look off upon
that line of railroad.

It is as straight as an arrow. Out
run the iron lines, glittering in the
sun, out as far as we can see, until con-
verging almost to a single thread, they
pierce the sky. What were those rails
laid in that way for. It is a road, is
it,—Try your cart or your coach there.
The axletrees are too narrow, and you
go bumping along upon the sleepers.
Try a wheelbarrow. You cannot keep
it on the rail. But that road was made
for something. Now go with me to
the locomotive shop. What is this.
We are told it is a locomotive. What
is a locomotive. Why, it is a carriage
moved by steam. But it is very
heavy. The wheels would sink into a
common road to the axle. The
locomotive can never run on a common
road, and the man is a fool who built
it.

Strange that men will waste time
and money in that way. But stop a
moment. Why wouldn't those wheels
just fit those rails. We measure them,
and then we go to the track and

measure its gage. That solves the
difficulty. Those rails were intended
for the locomotive, and the locomotive
for the rails. They are good for no-
thing apart. The locomotive is not
even safe anywhere else. If it should
go off after it is once on, it would run
into rocks and stumps, and bury itself
in sands or swamps, beyond recovery.

Young man you are a locomotive.
You are a thing that goes by a power
planted inside of you. You are made
to go. In fact, considered as a
machine, you are very far superior to
a locomotive.

The maker of the locomotive is man,
your maker is man's maker. You are
as different from a horse, or an ox, or
a camel, as a locomotive is different
from a wheelbarrow, a cart, or a coach.
Now do you suppose that the being
who made you, manufactured your
machine, and put into it the motive
power, did not make a special road for
you to run upon. My idea of religion
is that it is a railroad for a human lo-
comotive, and that just so sure as it
undertakes to run upon a road adapted
to only animal power, will it bury its
wheels in the sand dash itself among
rocks and come to inevitable wreck.
If you don't believe this try the other
thing. Here are forty roads, suppose
you choose one of them, and see where
you come out. Here is the dram shop
road. Try it. Follow it, and see how
long it will be before you come to
a stump and a smash-up. How is the
road of sensual pleasure? You are
just as sure to bury your wheels in the
dirt as you try it. Your machine is
too heavy for that track altogether.

Here is the wondering, uncertain
path of frivolity. There are morasses
on each side of it, and, with the head-
way that you are under, you will be
sure, sooner or later, to pitch into one
of them.

Here is the road of philosophy, but
it runs through a country from which
the light of Heaven is shut out ; and
while you may be able to keep your
machine right side up, it will only be
by feeling your way along in a clumsy
comfortless kind of style, and with no
certainty of ever arriving at the
heavenly terminus. Here is the road
of skepticism. This is covered with
fog, and a fence runs across it within
ten rods. Don't you know that your
machine was never intended to run on
those roads. Don't you know that it
it never was, and don't you know that
the only track upon which it can run
safely is the religious track.

Don't you know that just as long
as you keep your wheels on that track,
wreck is impossible. Don't you know
that it is the only track on which
wreck is not certain. I know it if you
don't, and I tell you that on that
track which God has laid down ex-
pressly for your soul to run upon,
your soul will find free play for all its
wheels, and an unobstructive and hap-
py progress. It is straight and narrow
but it is safe and solid and furnishes
the only direct route to the heavenly
city. Now, if God made your soul,
and made religion for it, you are a fool
if you refuse to place yourself in the
track. You cannot prosper anywhere
else and your machine will not run
anywhere else. I suppose that a nice
casuist would say that I had thus far
talked only of morality—only of ob-
edience to law. But I was only deal-
ing with the subject in the rough, and
trying to show you how rational a
thing religion is and to bring to your