

FRIENDLY HINTS TO THE YOUNG.



MEN are naturally impatient of restraint; prone to make their own will their *law*, and to pursue the desires of their own hearts. And especially is this true of youth, when just rising into the vigor of maturity. Having thrown off the trammels of childhood—untutored by experience—strangers to disappointment—impelled by passion—the sport of illusion—they urge their liberty to licentiousness, and “seek the opportunity to pursue every pleasure—to regale every sense—to gratify every inclination.” The season of *choice* has arrived—there is *danger* lest their choice shall prove fatal to their souls.

Suffer us, then, beloved youth, earnestly and affectionately to beseech you to pause, while yet upon the threshold of life, and consider the course you are to pursue. There is not a *parent*, a *patriot*, or a *Christian*, but regards your

course and destiny with an intense interest. There is not a *relation* existing in human society but is now, and will be hereafter, deeply affected by the characters which you sustain. In most cases the character, both for time and eternity, is formed in youth.

Religion and the world now spread out before you their respective claims. God, in his word, sets before your choice *life and death—a blessing and a curse*. The promises of the world are fair, and calculated to seduce your unpractised hearts; but they are as false and delusive as they are flattering and fair.

Solomon the wise has left his testimony, that the pursuits and enjoyments of the present life are vain and uncertain, and utterly incapable of affording supreme felicity. He recapitulates the richest possessions and chief delights of earth. He sums up his own unrivalled experience upon the subject, and pronounces all to be "vanity and vexation of spirit." Put the case in its most favorable aspect. "Let a man live many days," says he, "and rejoice in them all; *yet*, let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many."

The result of all the observation, and reasoning, and experience of this wisest of men, is given in few words: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."

Having most feelingly described the vanity of earth, he is urgent in pressing upon the *young* the *immediate* consecration of themselves to the service of God and true religion; and abundant in describing the peculiar peace and blessedness of piety, especially of *early* piety. We are taught by the Spirit of inspiration, that "*godliness* is profitable for all things, having the *promise*;" that "wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace;" that "the way of transgressors is hard;" that "there is no peace to the wicked;" and all this is fully attested by the *experience* of all generations. It is much in favor of the claims of religion, that not one solitary pious individual has ever repented the choice he had made, whatever self-denial, sacrifice, and hardship it may have involved.

But *who* has ever found *true happiness* in *sinful indulgence*? Where is the heart that has ever been *satisfied* with earthly joy?

The accomplished Col. Gardiner, at the very time when his gay companions were congratulating him as "*the happy rake,*" secretly wished himself *a dog.*

Sir John Mason, who had been a privy counsellor to four successive monarchs, in the evening of life declares, "Were I to live again, I would exchange the court for retirement, and the whole life I have lived in the palace, for one hour's enjoyment of God in my closet. All things else forsake me except my God, my duty, and my prayers."

The learned Selden, shortly before his death, declared, that "he had surveyed most of the learning that is amongst the sons of men; that his study was filled with books, and writings on various subjects; yet he could not, at that time, recollect any passage, out of infinite books and papers, *whereon he could rest his soul, save out of the sacred Scriptures;*" and the passage which lay most upon his heart was Titus 2: 11-14: "The grace of God which bringeth salvation."

"Father," exclaimed a gay and thoughtless son of railery to an aged hermit, who passed him barefoot, "you are in a very miserable condition, if there is not another world." "True, son," replied the hermit, "but what is thy condition, if there is?"

Can it be wise to make provision for the present life, as if it were never to have an end, and for the life to come, as if it were never to have a beginning?

It was affectingly said by Walsingham, prime minister to England's boasted queen, when rallied by those around him, upon his habitual seriousness, "Ah! my friends, while we laugh, all things are serious round about us. God is serious, who exerciseth such patience towards us. Christ is serious, who shed his blood for us. The Holy Ghost is serious, who striveth against the obstinacy of our hearts. The sacred Scriptures bring to our ears the most serious and important things in the world. The holy Sacraments represent to us

the most serious and awful matters. The whole creation is serious in serving God and us. All that are in heaven and in hell are serious. How, then, can *man*, that hath one foot in the grave, live in jest and thoughtless levity?"

Such, beloved youth, is the testimony of inspiration, and of experience, upon subjects in which you are infinitely interested.

"Wherewithal," says the Psalmist, "shall a young man cleanse his way? *By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*" My young reader, is this thy care? Hast thou given away thy heart unto the Lord? Is thy language, "My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" If so, it is well. God has said, "I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me." Yes! it is well. Peace, safety, honor, happiness await thee.

But it is to be feared that there are many of a very different character, whose hearts, and consciences, and lives are not in subjection to the divine authority.

Dear young friends, lend us, we beseech you, your attention for a moment, whilst we contemplate some of your secret, but cherished inclinations and purposes, in connection with the inevitable *result* of their indulgence.

You are secretly resolved to lead a life of pleasure and enjoyment; to indulge your own taste; to do whatever may please, amuse, or gratify yourselves; and to *postpone*, if not until the period of old age and infirmity, at least for the present, all sober, earnest, decisive attention to the great concerns of your souls. And in this way you expect to be happy; and the more happy, the more entirely you follow the desires of your own hearts, depraved and averse from God as those desires are!

You may not yet have abandoned every form of propriety and soberness—become the companions of the infidel scoffer, the lascivious, the profane, the shamelessly dissolute—or have entirely forsaken the way of the messengers of Heaven's warnings and of Heaven's mercies. But your aim is *self-indulgence*—to walk according to the sight of your eyes and the desire of your hearts—to explore freely

every source of worldly amusement, and thus to let your hearts cheer you, and to rejoice in the days of your youth.

You are disposed to cast off authority, to shun restraint, and to yield to your own inclinations, whether right or wrong—to make *your own will*, and not the commands of Jehovah, your law. You choose to waive the control and the guidance of religion, and to judge of things merely by their present agreeableness to sense and passion. So did the mother of all living. “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat.”

And in this course of yielding to the impulses of a depraved nature, and the temptations of an ungodly world, you are prone to cherish a *presumptuous security*. There are, indeed, occasional misgivings. But, when a troublesome conviction interrupts the repose of conscience, or a kindly impression of the Divine Spirit, at any time, softens the heart, the effort is to dismiss it, as Felix did the messenger of God: “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

Such is the course which you are naturally and strongly inclined to pursue; a course which involves the neglect of God and of true religion; a course in which thousands have perished before you; a course in which you can persevere only at the price of perdition. And the longer you continue in it, the more hazardous and hopeless will be your condition.

“Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but *know thou*, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment!” Ponder, we beseech you, the inevitable issue of an irreligious course—the certain result of substituting your own inclinations for the fear and love of God, and indulging a presumptuous security. It is the suggestion of the “father of lies,” that intimates to the sinner, “Ye shall not surely die.”

There is a future, final judgment, in which all mankind

shall be called to an account. "God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that we may every one receive according to the deeds done in the body, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." "The books shall be opened; and the dead, both small and great, shall be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works." "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing." Sometimes, even *here*, in his providence, he gives an earnest of the judgment to come. The sins of youth are often followed by disgrace and wretchedness in after-life; and conscience, in most cases, does, at least occasionally, admonish the sinner that a dreadful retribution awaits him.

Consider, also, that it is God's *own act* to bring men into judgment; God, whose creatures you are, to whom you are indebted for your being, and to whom you owe allegiance; God, who has the most unquestionable right to call you to an account; God, who seeth in secret, and knows all your history; almighty God, who is able to bring the most reluctant sinner into his presence, and to execute his righteous sentence to the uttermost. No rocks or mountains will hear the sinner's wailing, or, falling on him, hide him from the face of the Judge. No darkness or shadow of death shall be found where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves; and there is no exception in favor of the young. "The dead, both small and great, shall stand before God."

"Know ye, that *for all these things*," for every neglect of his service, every violation of duty, every sinful indulgence, "God will bring you into judgment." The great God, with whom you have to do, does neither justify nor forget these things. Job, when suffering under the hand of God, confessing his guilt with great sensibility of conscience, exclaims, "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth."

David supplicates, "Remember not against me the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." And the penitent Ephraim bemoans himself, "I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, *because I did bear the reproach of my youth.*" O! be assured, the offences and delinquencies of youth will, sooner or later, be the occasion of unfeigned sorrow; either of bitter repentance in this world, or of unavailing, everlasting anguish in the world to come. The Lord Jesus Christ will one day "be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel." It is a desperate determination to yield to present indulgence, at the expense of "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath."

And all this you are required to *consider*, and to *regard*, as it becomes creatures to whom God has given understanding and conscience, and the revelation of his will. And to choose or refuse that which is presented to you, according to the standard which will, at last, decide the character of human action—the *law of God*.

The interests you have at stake are *immense, everlasting, infinite!* Your *danger*, so long as you neglect the Saviour, is imminent. *The Son of God*, touched with compassion for your wretchedness, has interposed to save you. The present is, to you, an auspicious season. "God is waiting to be gracious." The door of mercy is open, and you are invited freely to enter. The habits of hardened transgression are not yet confirmed. The Holy One has said, "They that seek me early, shall find me." He expostulates with you, in the language of the prophet to which we have already referred, "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?"

Unless you are pardoned through the merits of the Saviour's blood, and live under the sanctifying influences of his Spirit, there is no safety for you, either as it respects time or eternity. *Delay not*, then, to flee to *the only refuge* provided for the sinner. *Beware, O beware* of putting off for *future* attention the claims of religion, of eternity, of God. Religion is *the "one thing needful;"* and "Behold,

now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation." Before even the days of *youth* shall have passed, you may be hurried to the judgment-seat of Christ. We have seen the young in their prime and vigor suddenly cut down, and witnessed their amazement of heart and terror of conscience. And we have heard their lamentations over opportunities neglected, time squandered, follies indulged! We have heard from the lips of *dying youth*, "Once my soul was impressed with a sense of the importance of religion. I suffered the impression to be effaced; I have been a *careless, thankless, wretched* sinner. O pray once more for my *salvation* before I appear at the bar of God." It was a moment when worlds would have been given for a single smile of His countenance, whose service had, throughout life, been neglected. And such, reader, may speedily be your condition. Neglectful of the only Saviour, a stranger to forgiveness, every unholy thought and desire, every idle word, every sinful act, is seen, is registered, will be produced, must be met, where crime is inseparable from infamy and horror!

Are you *prepared* to meet the summons which may come both suddenly and unexpectedly? *Resist* it, when it comes, you cannot. Have you a solitary scriptural warrant to conclude that, in your present condition and character, if called to your final account, you shall stand acquitted? If not, will you venture, even till the close of this day, to persevere in your present course?

O! "who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" "For-sake the foolish and live, and turn ye into the way of understanding." "*Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.*" "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding; exalt her, and she shall promote thee; she shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her."