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TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Baccalaureate Sermon—†

By J. W. Carter, D. D.,

†—To the Class of '92.

“Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.”—Psalms lxxxv: 11.

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TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven."—PSALMS LXXXV: II.

Heaven and earth were made for each other. The same infinite God created both. I am not here to tell you when He made them, or how He made them, but the fact upon which I insist is that He did make them by methods and processes of His own choice. He linked them together in sympathy and interest. It was His evident intention that each should sustain fixed and definite relations to the other. Earth received love, care and counsel from heaven, and gave back love, reverence and loyalty to heaven. Each needed the other. When sin came and threatened to divorce earth from heaven, God would not allow the two worlds to be separated. When the bonds by which they were first joined together failed, He replaced the broken bonds by others that were better and stronger.

If a planet should break away from its orbit, and go wildly rushing through space, disaster would be almost certain. There might be a "crush of worlds." Now earth was torn from the spiritual orbit in which it was intended to move; but Jesus Christ came in our own human form and nature, to arrest a guilty world in its retreat from God, bringing it back from its wanderings, and restore it to fellowship with heaven. It is said that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." (Luke xv: 10.) The angels are bright and happy spirits that not only sing and soar and shine in heaven, but they watch the conflicts and struggles of earth, and when any sinner repents they rejoice. You and I do not see them, but they see us. We cannot see the holy heights of glory, because "the veil of

flesh" which "hangs darkly between" hides heaven from our mortal vision; but surely earth and heaven cannot be so far apart, when the repentance of one sinner on earth sends a thrill of gladness through heaven. Surely earth should look up to heaven with joy and confidence, because heaven looks down on earth with compassion. In the text of this morning, we are reminded by the writer of the eighty-fifth Psalm that the Lord, in the beginning, established relations of sympathy and coöperation between heaven and earth.

"Truth shall spring out of the earth: and righteousness shall look down from heaven." The subject about which I want to talk to you to-day is Truth and Righteousness.

I. *Let us first notice that truth does spring out of the earth.* The first statement of our text is manifestly true. But here a question that is both simple and profound arises.

It is this: What is truth? It is an ancient question. It has echoed through the centuries. It has been asked millions of times. Anybody can ask it, but it is hard to answer. It was Pilate's question. That is a thrilling scene that is described in the eighteenth chapter of the fourth gospel. The perfectly holy, but falsely accused and wickedly condemned Jesus stood before the haughty Roman ruler, and, speaking with quiet dignity, said: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." When Pilate heard the lowly prisoner speak of His kingdom, he eagerly asked: "Art thou a king, then?" Jesus calmly answered: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Then the baffled and troubled Pilate grimly exclaimed, "What is truth?" and without waiting for an answer went out. (John xviii:36-38). What is truth? Various answers have been given to the question. But every man who feels the kingly power of the truth, and bows to

its royal majesty, knows that he cannot fully define it. One definition says that the truth is harmony with the Divine. It is agreement with God. He is the Supreme and All-glorious. In Him all possible perfections combine without any mingling of error or touch of human weakness. Every fact of His Universe is truth. Every act which agrees with the methods by which He governs the world is truth. Every thought and word and deed which agree with His word or will are truth.

Another definition says that the truth is reality. We may hate the real, denounce it, and deny its existence, but it is still truth. We may love the unreal, praise it, and worship it, but it is still falsehood. We cannot make truth. We can search for it, find it, and rejoice in it. We can love it and live it. We can enthrone it in our hearts, and exalt it in our lives. But we cannot manufacture it. Christ Himself did not come to create truth that did not exist before, but to reveal and declare truth that had existed from the beginning—not to make new truth, but to bear witness to ancient and eternal truth. It is just as true that we cannot unmake truth. We may oppose and oppress it; we may employ all earthly weapons in life-long attempts to destroy it, but it still survives, and will judge us in the great and final day. Neither can we fully comprehend it. It is vast and myriad-sided. It constantly presents aspects which are new and strange. We may compile our creeds and systems of philosophy. Perhaps we may put much truth into them. Possibly they are all truth; and it may be that we think that they contain the whole of the truth. But we are greatly mistaken. The truth is so mighty and measureless that we cannot make any vessel large enough to hold it all. Sometimes when we are ready to think that we have about mastered it, it suddenly flashes some new ray of light into our minds and dazzles us with its brightness, or turns upon us some aspect that we never saw before, and confounds us with a sense of our ignorance. If we try to pour it into the largest

earthen vessel, we will find that it will overflow in mighty waves which will roll away to the ends of the universe. But if we are earnest students of the truth, it will steadily grow upon us. Here I recall a passage from one of Frederick W. Robertson's sermons. He said: "The truth is infinite as the firmament above you. In childhood both seem near and measurable, but with years they grow and grow, and seem further off, and further, and grander, and deeper, and vaster as God Himself; till you smile to remember how you once thought you could touch the sky, and blush to recollect the proud and self-sufficient way in which you used to talk of knowing and preaching the truth." A man who thinks that he knows all the truth, or that his little mind can hold it all, is as mistaken and foolish as the child that stretches upward his puny hands and thinks that he can snatch the moon from the overarching skies.

Now, it is a fact that truth springs out of the earth. God made this great green earth for man. It is a mighty magazine of forces and resources. But nature is a good secret-keeper. Myriads of facts are locked up in her faithful keeping. She is not loose-tongued. She does not give up her secrets easily, but she guards them with ceaseless vigilance, and holds them with stubborn grasp. Yet, if we will come into sympathy with her, learn her language, get close to her great heart, and commune with her, she will speak to us with countless voices, and tell us ten thousand things that we never knew before. Every object that is above, around or beneath us, has its own peculiar history. Every stone by the wayside, every dust that floats in the air, every wind that blows, every water-drop in fountain, stream or ocean, every mineral that lies hidden in the earth, every stratum of rock beneath our feet, every plant that grows, every flower that blooms, every earth-worm that burrows in the ground, and every living creature that creeps or walks on the earth, flies in the air, or revels in the waters—yes, everything—can tell

us something that is new and startling about itself, if we will only learn its language.

Much of the work of science is to make truth "spring out of the earth." When man began his career, he knew but little of nature, and still less of the processes by which she is wooed and won. It looked as if he was the helpless servant of nature, and as if she could smite and buffet him as she pleased in return for the little which she gave to him. But he slowly advanced. His knowledge of nature and her methods steadily increased. Every inch of ground was stubbornly contested. Every forward step cost struggle and anguish. Students and philosophers, Colleges and Universities, have been diligent and patient in their efforts to wring the secrets of nature from her sealed lips and closed hands. They have made many mistakes, and suggested many false theories; they have often halted for a long time in front of some painful problem, but they have overcome enormous difficulties, and made wonderful discoveries. As a result of their labors civilization is pushed forward, comforts and conveniences are multiplied, and the conditions of life are vastly improved. In former ages the lightning seemed to be as capricious, defiant and unmanageable as anything could be. But now man has converted it into his useful servant. He snatches God's own fierce lightning from along its own sun-path in the trackless heavens, and uses it to flash the whispers of love, the rumors of war, and the fluctuations of trade across the continents, and under the oceans, "in the twinkling of an eye." At his bidding, it works his machinery and drives his loaded cars along his railways. He harnesses it to the chariots in which he rides. The millions who cultivate the soil, and those who work in the mines, and those who navigate the waters, and those who labor in the shops and factories, and those who toil in the homes, and those who teach and are taught in the schools, are all greatly indebted to modern science for the benefits and advantages which it brings to mankind. In all directions the domain

of human knowledge is widened. Not only does scientific truth "spring out of the earth," but, it seems to me, that many hints and suggestions of moral truth come from the same source. I know that nature is often severe. She has no mercy on those who break her laws, and offers no pardon to those who sin against her. But to the reverent spirit she is a teacher of religious truth. When God made man and placed him on the earth, He knew that our wants would increase in number and extent, and provided for them. All that is needed for our physical nourishment and comfort, and our mental stimulation, is put within our reach, and is locked up in earth, and air, and fire, and water. And now, as science marches along its path of conquest; as it multiplies its triumphs; as it uncovers new resources and discovers new forces; and as it makes new uses and applications of forces long known, does it not proclaim the foreknowledge, wisdom and goodness of God, and remind us of the duty of giving praise to Him?

But the progress of science still continues. The time when it can be said, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther," is doubtless far away in the future. At the present time truth "springs out of the earth" more readily and abundantly than ever before. But more still remains to be done. Nature is only partially conquered. She still holds thousands of secrets which she will yet reveal; and Astronomy, Geology, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology and the other sciences are the methods of persuasion by which she is induced to talk to us, and tell us much that the past could not learn.

We all rejoice in the prosperity of this honored institution of learning, which will soon close its first century of labor and usefulness; and we do not forget that one purpose for which it was established, and for which it still exists, is to aid in the work of causing truth to "spring out of the earth."

II. We next notice that righteousness looks down from heaven. Righteousness is right-doing. If we do right from

right motives, we are righteous; but if we do wrong, we are unrighteous. True righteousness regards the state of the heart as well as the outward life. If we inwardly love truth, goodness, purity, and duty, and consistently follow them, we are righteous. But if we love any form of falsehood, or iniquity, or engage in any evil practice, we are unrighteous. Righteousness requires not only that we shall be pure and truthful in our speech, honest in our dealings, and honorable in all the relations of life, but that we shall also worship and serve the living God. It demands that we shall love both God and man, and regard all moral and christian obligations to both God and man. Some people claim that because they are moral, or because they speak the truth, pay their debts, and are decent in their lives, or because they are not thieves, liars, drunkards, or libertines, they are good enough for both earth and heaven, and God is bound to save them. But they have not considered the breadth, depth and height of righteousness. While morality is always better than immorality, is always good as far as it goes, and should always be encouraged, it is not all there is of righteousness. Godliness is the highest form of righteousness. As the highest form of righteousness, it includes the lower forms of righteousness; but the lower forms of righteousness do not always include the highest form.

A young man is a clerk in a great wholesale store in which scores and hundreds of other clerks are employed. He treats his fellow-clerks properly; he doesn't deceive or cheat them; he takes no unfair advantage of them; but he robs his employer to enrich himself. Most of the money that he squanders on himself or invests for his profit is stolen. Yet he insists that he is a good and true man, because he does not steal from the other clerks. But is he righteous? Surely he is not. You know that he is a thief. But he is very much like the men who think that the gates of glory will fly wide open before them, because they treat their fellow-men fairly and kindly—though they rob God of

the love, praise and service which He requires. Scripture righteousness includes not only morality, but also sincere worship and spiritual religion.

But it is a fact that we are all sinners. We have all broken the perfect law and exposed ourselves to the wrath of God. Our moral nature is corrupt; and sin, like a cleaving and clinging curse, taints our blood and lives. There is not one of us who can boast of a righteousness that is sufficient to justify him before the heart-searching God. It is not in our power to take our guilt away, or change our perverse nature. The holy law threatens to overwhelm us with the awful condemnation which crushes the angels that sinned and fell. We cannot, without help from above, raise ourselves from sin and earthliness to fellowship with God. What, then, can we do? Is there any way of escape for us? Yes, there is. Legal righteousness cannot save us; but gospel righteousness can lift us to heights of bliss so lofty that angels and archangels look up to them with admiration. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii: 16). There is one who is "mighty to save." Jesus Christ, the divine Son of the infinite Father, came into the world in the likeness and nature of man; lived the life of faultless obedience and stainless holiness; helped the needy; healed the sick, and raised the dead; died the death of sacrifice; went down into the lonely grave; conquered death in his wintry territory; rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He "ever liveth to make intercession for us." He is our Almighty Saviour, and if we truly repent of our sins, turn from them to Him, lay hold upon Him by faith, and come into union with Him, we will find that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x: 4), and that "the righteousness which is of faith" can cleanse our guilt away, change us from nature to grace, and robe and crown us in heaven. How we should love Christ, and devote

our powers and lives to His service! How we should honor and exalt Him! I do not wonder that the ancient prophets looked forward with unrestrained gladness to His coming. Many of them lived when times were dark and threatening. Sometimes, as they sat upon the "Mount of Vision," and peered away through the dense gloom into the far future, no star of hope rose before them. They almost feared that the great waves of wickedness would roll all around the earth and drown out every spark of faith and goodness. They were often in the deepest distress. The tears gathered in their eyes, and their souls were bowed down with grief. But they would suddenly catch a glimpse of the promised Christ, and of the greatness and glory of His Kingdom; and then their faces would brighten with joy; the tear that had started in the eye would forget to fall; the sigh that had swelled the heart would die half-born on the lips; and the prophets of Israel and the poets of Judah would shout their songs of triumph, and sweep anew their harp-strings to the praise of God!

Now, we are told that righteousness looks down from heaven. It is so. There is no touch or taint of sin in heaven. It is the glorious abode of everlasting righteousness. "There shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." (Rev. xxi: 27). The inhabitants of heaven are all perfectly righteous. The angels that surround the throne are as righteous as God Himself can make them. "The spirits of just men made perfect" have risen to unmingled righteousness. God is infinitely righteous. His Kingdom is a Kingdom of righteousness. But He is exalted so far above us, that we cannot solve all the mysteries of His government. When we try to explain His movements and methods in Providence, we often fail most grievously, because our knowledge is so limited. In our attempts to understand His ways and works, we are often dazzled by that "excess of brightness" which produces the most painful blindness. Speaking out of the unseen glory, He says:

“ My thoughts are not your thoughts ; neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah lv: 8, 9). We dwell in a kind of murky twilight. We see only some fragments of the past and the present. The future is all hidden from our gaze. We look at things from the lowly standpoint of this life. With dimmed eyes and imperfect vision, “ we see through a glass darkly ;” and, of course, we make many mistakes. But God, who beholds the past, present and future at every glance of His eye ; takes in all the interests of all worlds at every thought of His mind, and directs the march of events from the height of His own throne, often sees order where we see chaos, gains where we see loss, and success where we see failure.

On the 14th of April, 1865, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. The gigantic war, which is still so fresh in the recollections of multitudes of the American people, was just closing. The victorious North was all in a blaze of rejoicing, while the defeated South was almost crushed with depression. The whole country was convulsed with excitement. But just at the time when Lincoln would have proved to the world how generous and great-hearted he could be in the hour of his triumph, he was struck down by the assassin’s bullet. The nation felt the shock. That shot touched millions of American hearts. Next day thousands of excited men gathered at Union Square in New York City. They were angry and turbulent. Each man felt as if he wanted to avenge the death of the fallen President. Persons and property were threatened. But at a critical moment a stranger of fine appearance stood on the platform and made a brief speech. He said :

“ The Lord reigneth ; let the earth rejoice ; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about Him : righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne.” (Psalms xcvi: 1, 2).

The people were calmed, and violence was prevented. That stranger was James A. Garfield. A little more than sixteen years afterwards, when he was President of the United States, another assassin fired another fatal shot. After eighty days of languishing, another murdered President went down through the prayers of millions into the grave; and again we were reminded that though "clouds and darkness are round about Him," yet "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." Yes! "clouds and darkness are round about Him," but it is eternally true that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne." Often the clouds and darkness are so thick that they obscure the righteousness and judgment; but when the clouds and darkness pass away, and are gone, the righteousness and judgment still remains, and shine like the sun in his splendor. The righteous heaven looks down with sympathy upon this sinning and suffering world. The righteousness of heaven bends downward to help us in our trials and sorrows, and guide us onward and upward until we shall see "the King in His beauty."

III. There is the fullest agreement between truth and righteousness. It is a well known fact that men often contradict each other in the name of truth and righteousness; but in this world no man's righteousness is perfect, and no man's knowledge of the truth is perfect. Sharp disputes arise between some men whose righteousness is imperfect, and other men whose knowledge of the truth is imperfect; but the contentions in which they engage are not a warfare between truth and righteousness, but rather a fight between ignorance and bigotry. There can be no positive disagreement between absolute truth and pure righteousness. No antagonism can divide them, because both come from God. In heaven they walk together hand in hand, and live together in sweetest accord; and on earth they seek each other. They can no more oppose each other than God Himself can be opposed to Himself. There cannot be a conflict between

them any more than there can be a conflict between heat and light, or a conflict between sun, moon and stars.

Righteousness is based upon truth. It needs the truth for its guidance. It is a consistent practice of the truth. Truth is the foundation of righteousness, and righteousness is the natural fruit of the truth. Righteousness without truth would soon die, and truth without righteousness would cease to be a blessing. The greatest of the Apostles said: "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom i: 18.) It is not enough for us to "hold the truth," but we must hold it in righteousness. Much depends upon the spirit in which it is held. To hold even the truth in unrighteousness, is a sin which cries aloud for the withering wrath of heaven. We must hold the truth righteously, and be righteous through obedience to the truth. Truth and righteousness are related as closely as the railroad track and train. The well graded, well laid and well ballasted track is useless without the train; and the well equipped and well manned train is helpless without the track. Each calls for the other. As the train needs the track, so righteousness needs the truth; and as the track guides the train, so the truth guides righteousness. If we possess the truth without regard to righteousness, we are like a man who has a good railway track but no train to run on it. But if we seek righteousness without regard to truth, we are like one who has a complete train, but no track for it to run on. While the train keeps on the track, it is safe, unless the track is obstructed; but when it leaves the track it rushes on to ruin and death, and is, perhaps, crushed into a shapeless mass of broken timbers, mangled flesh and splintered bones. As long as righteousness follows the truth, we may know that it is genuine; but when it departs from the truth, moral peril comes.

In this age of discussion, it is often said that there is "an irrepressible conflict" between science and religion. It is

sometimes declared, with great emphasis, and perhaps with intense bitterness, that science contradicts the Bible. But such statements are rash, and, indeed, almost reckless. I am ready to admit that some men's interpretation of science does contradict other men's interpretation of the Bible, but that does not prove that there is any necessary antagonism between them. The truth is that neither is fully understood. We know many things about science; we also know many things about the Bible; but we do not know everything about either. The Bible is old, but it still lives in the freshness of youth, and in the hearts of scores of millions of the best men and women. Science is young, and still has much both to learn and to teach. The man who can scale all the heights, sound all the depths, and measure all the lengths and breadths of the wonderful book which holy men were inspired to write, has not yet lived. It is equally true that the man who has searched all the universe of God, mastered all the branches of science, and correctly interpreted all the facts of all departments of science, has not yet come. We are still waiting for him, but with no hopeful prospect that he will ever get here. Now, when we are living without any perfect knowledge of either science or the Bible, is it modest, or even sensible, to declare that there is a conflict between them, unless, indeed, the contradiction should be very evident and glaring?

The men who discuss the Bible and science may be divided into four classes. The first class consists of those who know something of science, but nothing of the Bible. The second class consists of those who know something of the Bible, but nothing of science. The third class consists of those who know something of both science and the Bible. The fourth class consists of those who know nothing of either. And, perhaps, it is not strange that the men of the fourth class are often the most violent and vociferous of all the debaters. They can afford it, because they have so little to lose. They have no knowledge of facts to restrain them. A few crude

second-hand opinions are all their stock in trade; and all they have to do is to turn themselves loose, and hear themselves talk. It is nothing new for fools to "rush in where angels fear to tread." You may find many an irreverent man whose knowledge of Christian truth is painfully limited; but rough-shod with ignorance and egotism, he stamps and struts with heavy and reckless step over ground so sacred that angels would walk it softly, and with unsandaled feet.

It is easy to see that only men of the third class—those who have some knowledge of both science and the Bible—are at all competent to discuss the subject to which I refer, and they are quite likely to be modest and careful in their statements. When you hear some learned theologian denouncing some of the conclusions of science in the name of the Bible, it may be well enough to pause and reflect that perhaps he knows very little about science; or, when you hear some worshiper of science denouncing the Christian religion in the name of science, it may be well enough to stop and consider that, probably, he is fearfully ignorant of the Bible.

God has revealed Himself to us in two books. One is the vast volume of nature, and the other is the more condensed volume of inspiration. He has given us two revelations of Himself. One is the nature-revelation, and the other is the word-revelation. Though they touch each other at various points and angles, yet, in the main, they lead along different, but often parallel pathways; open different, but often adjoining fields of thought, and present different aspects of the divine character, and different facts of the divine government. Both revelations are specially important. Each may aid us in the study of the other. Each supplements the other. Each may modify our interpretation of the other. Each may help us in rising to a larger and better conception of God, but neither is perfectly understood. I am not anxious that the Bible should agree exactly with the science of the present day; for if it did agree precisely with the

science of to-day, it is certain that it could not agree with the corrected and improved science of the future. When both shall be better understood than they are now, and shall speak their last, best, truest word to mankind, it will be found that they will sustain and confirm each other. With united voice, they will declare the perfection of God; and, living together in everlasting harmony, will serve His kingdom. Jesus Christ will be the Lord of heaven and earth; His redeemed church will be His Bride, and she will go forth in truth and righteousness to bless the nations; and all the sciences will bring their brightest trophies and lay them down at the feet of the glorified King and His ransomed Bride.

IV. *In the formation of character, truth and righteousness are essential, and should be intelligently combined.* The value of worthy character cannot be overstated. What a man is, is vastly more important than what he has. What he has may be soon lost, but what he is will endure forever. What he has may be only transient, but what he is will be eternal. Of all we have in the present world, we, when we go hence, can take nothing with us, except the character that we form in this fleeting life. When we die, home and friends, wealth and poverty, earthly joys and sorrows, honors and strivings will all be left behind, but the character we make here will go with us into the presence of the Supreme Judge, and will decide our destiny in the awful other world. Never, in limitless eternity, can we get away from it. Volumes of moral truth and personal experience are condensed into the familiar quotation: "Sow the thought, and reap the act; sow the act, and reap the habit; sow the habit, and reap the character; sow the character, and reap the destiny." The most important work that God gives us to do is character-building. It is solemn, serious work, which will outlive the earth itself. Every man builds a character. Every man is the architect of a house, with which he must either stand or fall. Every day that we live, we are making character, either good

or bad; character which will be either a blessing or a curse in eternity as well as in time. In character-building, two things are necessary. The first is a safe foundation. It is already laid for us, and is waiting for us to build on it. We find the foundation that we need in the Christ of the gospel, and in the truth which He taught, and which He is. Listen to what He said: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it." (Matt. vii: 24-27.) If we hear the words of Christ, and obey them, we are wise builders, because we build on the ancient Rock of the truth; and it is a foundation that can never be moved. Amid the tempests of the judgment it will remain as unshaken as the throne of God. But if we reject Christ and the salvation that He offers, we are foolish builders, because we build upon the "sinking sand." Our house is doomed. It will tumble into ruins when we need it most. Instead of being a secure refuge, it will be a slaughter-house of the soul.

In addition to a sure foundation, we also need good building materials; and we find them in the practice of the precepts and principles of righteousness. The inspired apostle wrote: "Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (I Cor. iii: 12, 13.) If we build our character of the gold, silver and precious stones of righteousness, our work will endure. Final fires—the fires which will melt the great globe and lick the ocean dry—will test

it, but will not hurt it. But if we build of the wood, hay and stubble of earthliness, our labor will be in vain. It will perish. The fire will make short work of it. A character must be a structure of righteousness built upon the foundation of the truth, to stand the final fiery test. The character which consists of righteousness, founded upon the truth, will abide.

Here I will mention two perils which threaten character. One is intellectual. It is the temptation to exalt truth, and especially secular truth, at the expense of righteousness. Ambitious young men see that "knowledge is power." They observe that trained intellect compels recognition, and is a dominant force in the management of the world's affairs. They also know that the leaders of thought, who rule the nations by the ideas which they enforce, are educated men. Many of the best and most promising young men go to college, and devote years of patient labor to studies which are especially intended to develop and train the intellect. The pursuit of knowledge is often most absorbing. A student may be so intensely interested in his work that he heeds no warning until the nervous collapse comes, and his body is broken and wrecked. There is also a worse peril. Some students may come to feel that secular education is sufficient; and may neglect or pervert the moral and the religious in the development of the intellectual. But we are often reminded that mental culture is no certain protection against animalism. Men may be brilliant and learned, and yet be the slaves of vice. They may have the best training of the best schools, and yet be guilty and godless. They may be great and gifted, and yet wallow in selfishness and sensuality, and walk the downward path of moral degradation.

Away in a quiet country neighborhood there is a Christian home. The father and mother worship the God of truth and righteousness. Their religion brightens and beautifies their lives. They love their children, and wish to give them a better chance than they enjoyed. They have a boy

who is their pride. They send him to college. They toil and save to support him while he is getting his education. They look forward with bounding hope to the time when he will finish his course of study, and expect to find the reward of their painful sacrifices in his intelligence, character, and usefulness. But they are disappointed. He yields to temptation. The chains of evil habit are fastened upon him. He opens his mind and heart to ruinous errors. He returns home to squander his manhood in wickedness, and sneer at the Bible and the God of his father and mother. It is a sad sight. Angels might almost weep while loving hearts almost break. Righteousness is needed. Unless we add righteousness to knowledge, we leave great spaces and areas of the soul without cultivation. Let us seek truth that we may use it for righteous purposes.

But there is also an opposite peril. It takes the form of an overdone spirituality. Some sincere but mistaken men who realize that—

“ Religion is the chief concern
Of mortals here below,”

think that, because godliness is better than earthly learning, therefore all human learning is worthless. They would not only leave piety in its own large place, but they would also put it in the place of intelligence. They claim that righteousness is so precious that it can dispense with all truth that requires *special study*. Of course, the conclusion is false. It is worse than that. It is a burlesque on common sense. You must combine truth with righteousness if you would form the kind of character that a good man must have. People who are so pious that they despise useful knowledge, and do not seek or love the truth, and are not willing to be guided and guarded by it, are in daily danger. Their righteousness, if they have any, is weak and wavering. Their character is either feebly good, or positively bad. Even if they pretend to righteousness, they run into wild excesses,

or rush into deadly errors; they freeze with formalism, or burn with fanaticism; or they sink into mere sensationalism or rank superstition. It is hard to restrain our contempt for men who seem to think that the religion of Christ thrives on ignorance, and sanctifies idleness and foolishness. Spiritual pride may be as offensive as intellectual vanity. Either is an enormous injury to character. God gives us both brain and heart. He doubtless means that both should be cultivated. If either is neglected, both suffer. No man can damage either without maiming and laming himself most dreadfully. The best and grandest man is he whose character is the finest combination of truth and righteousness.

Now, I close with a few words of honest appeal. Each of us is a character-builder. There are many things which you may never do. You may never hold an office, or make a speech, or be a candidate, or write a book, or edit a newspaper, or cultivate a farm, or manage a store or factory. But there is one thing you must do. You must build a character. You couldn't help it, if you were to try. A character of some kind is the inevitable result of the life that you live and the pursuits that you follow. And the only character that is worth having—the only character that is not worse than none—is that in which truth and righteousness are combined. Remember, also, that generally decisive direction is given to character while we are young. The outlines of the character of the future are commonly laid in childhood or youth. In later years there may be much filling in and refining, and many additions and subtractions, but it is not often that the original outlines are greatly changed.

Far beyond the largest meaning of the strongest language that I can use, it is important that the young men who come to our State University for intellectual training should form and possess the best character to which they can attain. What a blessing it would be to them hereafter! How it would give them a keener and juster sense of their obligations

to God and humanity! How it would enlarge their moral manhood! How it would increase their usefulness! How it would widen and hallow their influence! How it would lead them along a higher and brighter pathway! What an untold benefit it would be, not only to them, but to us all, to our honored Commonwealth, to our great country, and to our world, still bleeding from thousands of wounds that need to be healed! Be faithful students; strive for the best scholarship; get the richest and ripest culture that you can obtain; but above all, be men, genuine manly men—men of sterling character. Have I not a right to say that your wisest and safest friends—parents, some of whom make severe sacrifices that some of you may be here; brothers and sisters, who anxiously await your home-coming, and are eager to look into your faces and grasp your hands; teachers, who are so worthy of your respect and confidence, and so capable of giving the best instruction, and Christian friends who follow you along life's pathway with interest and prayer—have I not a right to say that all these desire, not only that you may secure the best culture, but that your character may testify to the wondrous power of truth and righteousness. Soon some of you will go forth from these "classic shades" to fight the stern battles of life, bearing the honors of your *Alma Mater*. She entrusts much of her reputation to your keeping. With what deep interest will she watch your course, and with what profound pleasure will she, in coming years, inscribe your names on the lengthening roll of her honored sons, if you add the beauties of high character to the graces of broad scholarship.

Go preach "the everlasting gospel," and tell the weary and the wandering of the Crucified. Go, and in the halls of legislation give your voice and influence to the enactment of righteous laws, which will secure "the greatest good to the greatest number." Go, and administer justice from the bench, or plead for righteousness at the bar. Go, and carry the benefits of the healing art to the sick and suffering. Go,

and adorn and dignify the teacher's profession with your scholarship and fidelity. Go, walk "the highways and byways of literature, and enrich our libraries with fresh flowers plucked from Parnassan heights. Go, and amid the struggles and strivings of business life, show that education does not unfit men for practical affairs. Go, cultivate the soil, and prove that the educated farmer may be the successful farmer, and that man's oldest occupation is still worthy of his best efforts. But wherever you go or whatever you do, wherever you live or wherever you die, do not forget the abiding and supreme value of that character which is the best product of truth and righteousness.







