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Temperance

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TEMPERANCE.

An Address read before the Temperance Society of William & Mary College by Beverley Tucker, Professor of Law. Published at the request of the Society.

I regret, gentlemen, that my engagements have so long delayed the fulfilment of the duty to which you have been pleased to appoint me. My regret is proportioned to the interest I take in your association, and my desire to show myself not unworthy of the favorable opinion manifested in your selection of myself for that duty. But even now, I beg you to accept my congratulations on what you have done, and my thanks, on behalf of our venerable alma mater, for the service you have rendered to her.

It is not my purpose to expatiate on the evils of intemperance, or the general advantages of temperance societies. Were I so inclined, I should find myself forestalled by innumerable publications, in which every argument has been exhausted, every exhortation urged, every anecdote collected.

* We have departed from our rule in giving a place to the above Address, but as the duties of the learned author have, of late years, rendered his contributions like "angels' visits," we would fain woo him again into our columns.—[Ed. Marsh.]
have no mind to steal the thoughts, or to repeat the words of other men, or to state facts, however striking, on doubtful evidence. It is in bad taste to put forth statements which stagger the faith of the hearer; and exhortations which urge too strongly the sluggish zeal, are apt to "return void" to him that utters them. The credulous simplicity that so often characterizes the best men, sometimes betrays them into indiscretions which injure the cause they advocate. Guileless themselves, they apprehend no guile in others: and, in perfect sincerity of heart, relate, as unquestionable, every anecdote they find in circulation. So too the intemperate zeal, with which some men advocate the cause of temperance, and urge on others the example of their own tastes and habits, sometimes provokes reaction. Men are reminded of the exhortation of the Apostle, "to be temperate in all things:" and they feel, that, in the example of those who are so, there is a beauty that needs no eloquence to recommend it.

Let me not be suspected of undervaluing temperance societies, or their labors in the cause of human happiness and virtue. Few men perhaps estimate them more highly: none prize them more. As a matter of taste, intemperance is not more disgusting to any man on earth, than myself. As a moral evil, no man looks upon it with more abhorrence. As an enemy to peace, order, intelligence, industry, and all the elements of prosperity, no man deems it more deserving of restraint and censure. But it is superfluous to dwell on truths denied by none who are not deaf to the teachings of reason and experience.

Of the general evils of intemperance therefore, I do not propose to speak, nor shall I offer more than a passing remark on that worst form which the deadly mischief ever can assume; when, like the canker-worm, it insinuates itself into the bud of the youthful mind, and eats the core, and forever arrests its farther development. I should be uncandid, gentlemen, did I pretend to think that many of you had been in actual danger, of this disastrous evil. Guileless themselves, they appreciate the canker-worm, it insinuates itself into the bud first struggle with this temptation is not postponed the deadly mischief ever can assume the canker-worm, it insinuates itself into the bud first struggle with this temptation is not postponed the deadly mischief ever can assume the canker-worm, it insinuates itself into the bud first struggle with this temptation is not postponed the deadly mischief ever can assume the canker-worm, it insinuates itself into the bud first struggle with this temptation is not postponed

When there is none to pity, none to soothe, and none to censure, shall be forbear to steep his senses in forgetfulness with the oblivious draught that courts his lip! Happy! happy he, whose first struggle with this temptation is not postponed till the authority of parents and tutors and the influence of generous emulation are no more, and till the petty troubles that do but dim the sunshine of youth, are exchanged for that deep midnight of the mind, which no ray of hope can penetrate, and which despair peoples with the fiends, and lights up with the fires of hell.

Gentlemen; if I were called on to say wherein consists the chief advantage of an academic education, I should place it precisely here. Speaking from the experience of a life, of which nearly half has been spent in connexion with this institution, I am satisfied that it teaches nothing so valuable as self-knowledge, and the habits of self-command, self-respect, and self-confidence, which it is our study to establish in the mind of the student. I think I may speak as well for my brother-professors as for myself, when I say, that never do we feel so sure that our labors will not be in vain, as when we see that the minds of our young friends are awakened to a sense of the value of these things.
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the enjoyment of all the privilege!', and (as he

unprepared to the exercise of all the rights, and

if not to punish. But no. The fatal hour has

come; the wand of authority is broken; the word

of power is hushed; and the impatient youth, im-

patient by reason of his prolonged pupillage, rushes

unprepared to the exercise of all the rights, and

the enjoyment of all the privileges, and (as he

fondly imagines) the pleasures of manhood, and

absolute freedom.

Gentlemen; that season of preparation which

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neither affirm nor deny this. It may or may not
be so. That their ebullitions are then most fre­quent and conspicuous, I doubt not. Not regu­lated by experience, not restrained by reason, youth, given up to absolute independence and self­command, rarely exhibits any things but instan­ces of degrading and mischievous self-indulgence. But, even in such cases, we seldom find that any
one passion takes the entire mastery of the whole
man. Ambition fights against debauchery: the love of pleasure against the love of money. Vanity struggles with sloth; and Love, the most active and seducing of the whole, rebukes every thing that is degrading, and stimulates to all that is graceful and honorable. And Love itself: what is it in the young heart just awakened to its influence?

A fire that warms, but burns not; a pleasing pang, whose agony delights: a sylvph-like form, that spreads its gossamer-wing in the eye of beauty; and feeds on the balmy sights of hope, and is chilled and dissipated by the cold breath of indifference. I am aware that I am here treading on dangerous
ground, and may provoke a spirit of opposition to all I have advanced, or may advance. I dare say there are few among you, who have not already conceived a passion, which, to him that feels it, seems immortal. Few arrive at full manhood, without having contracted a disease of the heart, which the victim expects to carry to his grave. And why not! Who would not die so sweet a death! How can the passion cease, when he brings it to his bosom as the joy, not the torment, of his life! The thing is impossible. But when Coquetry throws aside her mask; when the art that was employed to ensnare the suitor, is no longer exerted to retain the disregarded lover; "when nodes and becks and wreathed smiles," are exchanged for slighting neglect—what then! What though the “Sapphire’s blaze may cease to shine” beside the eye of Phillis—what though it is “jet black, and like a hawk, and winna let a body be”! Is there not something more touching, more ten­der, in the dewy glance that steals from the half transparent lid of Chloe’s, “like the clear blue sky, just trembling through a cloud of purest white,” or as if a violet peeped out from beneath a new-fallen snowflake! Is there no reaction in offended self­love, to kindle resentment, and suggest the thought

"If she be not fair for me,
What care I how fair she be?"

Is there nothing in the testimony of the flattering mirror to remind the graceful youth, that if she won, another will! In short, whatever be the force of youthful passion, is there nothing in the versatility of youth to divert its energy, or elude the destroying blow! Who would sacrifice life, health, honor, peace of mind, self-respect, or even the cold sense of duty, for any one object, when surrounded by ten thousand others, all lawful, all within reach, all glittering with the dews of life’s young morning, all sparkling in its rosy light!

Gentlemen; the passage from childhood to age is the transition from the belief that all is bright and beautiful and good, to the conviction that all is vanity. In this transition, the passions, one by one, wither and perish, as the worthlessness of their respective objects is made manifest by expe­rience. But the desire of happiness remains, and the heart, as eagerly as ever, asks, "who will show it any good!" Thus the force of each ex­piring passion is distributed among those which survive, until at last, when only one remains, that one burns with all the intensity of all the rest.

The difference between him who has lived to know that there is nothing good under the sun, and him who has but ascertained the worthlessness of all
things but one, on which alone his hopes of happiness are centred, is the difference between a soul prepared for heaven, and one ready to sell itself to perdition. Look at Ambition as it flames in the breast of a man, who, having accomplished all the subordinate purposes of life, has outlived every domestic enjoyment, without having outlived his powers. In the heart of the husband and father, it holds a divested empire. To the widowed and childless old man, it is the fierce and remorseless tyrant that prompts him to trample on the hopes and hearts of others. "What it inflicts he feels." Look at Avarice. Why is it soard and craving, just in proportion as the miser has none to love, none to inherit his wealth? The reason is the same. All other passions have been lopped away, and the whole vigor of the mind has gone to nourish this.

Now turn to the other extreme of life. See childhood's furious rage and clamorous grief! If Passion have power to kill, shall that boy live to manhood? Even while you ask the question, it is answered in a beaming smile of love and joy. Some new and cheap delight has soothed his grief, and won his heart. So truly says the poet—

"The tear, downs childhood's cheek that flows,
Is like the dew-drop on the rose;
When next the summer-breeze sweeps by,
And waves the bush, the flower is dry."

In short, the business of education is, at first, to play off the passions and appetites against each other. When Reason dawns, her light is well employed, to show the essential difference between objects until then equally coveted, because equally valued. But it is long before Reason becomes strong enough to contend alone with Passion. She must engage the alliance of rival passions, till, having used them to conquer, and finally to destroy each other, she may establish her serene empire over the mind.

The most important, and the most hopeful struggle, is that which takes place in the season of life commonly devoted to academic education. The heart just then begins to perceive beauty and attraction in objects, which can only be attained by virtuous effort. The newly awakened spirit of independence urges to those exertions which are necessary to secure it. The masnet love of Fame points to her temple, seated on an eminence which none can climb without toil—approachable only by a path which none can tread, unless led by the hand of Virtue. Then too, is first felt the charm of Beauty's favoring smile; and even this, intoxicating though it be, prompts, as I have said, to all that is decorous—all that is graceful—all that is honorable.

At such a moment, when the prevailing passions of the hour covet the guidance of Reason, and offer themselves in aid of her instructions, it is fit that she should decline the proffered alliance, and commit the whole discipline of the mind, during that most critical season, to a system of coercion! Should she not rather seize the occasion to imbue the heart with a lively scorn of every thing that is base, with disgust and loathing at every thing that is impure, brutal, or degrading? Is not that the moment to place before generous and aspiring youth the Cirecean cup, that transforms the image of God into a beast, that, with his own hands, he may dash it to the ground, and trample on its fragments!

Thus we reason. It is in this spirit, that those who have charge of the education of youth, choose to commit the regulation of their own conduct, in great measure, to the youth themselves. We think it enough to bring in aid of Reason, and their own nobler passions, our candid advice, and frank admonitions; and, in the last resort, to apply the extreme measure of our academic censures, and to cut off, and banish from among us, those whom these admonitions, aided by Reason, and Ambition, and the Love of HONORABLE INDEPENDENCE, and the Love of Woman, cannot keep from the foul sty of brutish debauchery. Let them go! Such is the sentence of law, and I am persuaded there is not one among you, whose heart does not ratify it.

Why am I thus persuaded! It is because you have had some little experience of the evil. It is because you have been permitted to taste for yourselves the apples of Sodom, and to find that, though fair to look upon, they are ashes to the taste.

But is this all? No gentlemen. You have achieved a triumph over yourselves. You have gained the present mastery over an appetite, which, whatever may be said of other passions, grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength. He who yields to it in youth, may vainly contend against it in after life. You can never know that you are safe, unless, like the strong man of Crotone, you daily try your strength upon it. If you shrink from the weight of the eaf, you must be crushed under the burden of the full grown ox.

After all that I have said, you will hardly be surprised when I add, that I am more pleased than otherwise that your association is temporary. You cannot determine too soon, nor bind yourselves than otherwise that your association is temporary. You have had some little experience of the evil. It is long enough to serve as an exercise of self-denial, self-command, and fortitude. You will be perhaps the better for an early opportunity of making a new trial of yourselves. It is perhaps as long a term as it may be prudent to engage for. You cannot determine too soon, nor bind yourselves too solemnly to conform in all things, and through life, to the law of God, and to the laws of your country. But when a man proposes to devise for himself a rule of action going beyond these, and to impose on himself restraints not prescribed by these; it becomes him to consider whether the youth of eighteen has a right to bind, by a law of his own
making, the conduct of the man of forty. It is prudent to consider whether the mature man will not think of this, and absolve himself by the plea of infancy. He who, in early youth, makes such an engagement, will not be long in discovering, that to this conclusion he may come at last; and, anticipating that his pledge will, sooner or later, be recalled, he has the less difficulty in making up his mind to recall it at once.

Thus you may see, gentlemen, that when I say that I like your association for being temporary, it is because I have more confidence that it will live out its allotted time, than if it professed to be perpetual. Irrevocable resolutions, eternal friendships, and unchangeable love, all belong to the same category. Had your association been of that character, I should not have been surprised if some few members had already renounced the pledge, finding their excuse in the thought I have just expressed. As it is, all are left without excuse. And yet, in my view of your pledge, its great value is that you are free to break it from day to day, and that it is thus from day to day an ever-recurring trial of your strength, fortitude, and self-command. In violating, or renouncing it, you will injure none but yourselves. You have but to plead infirmity of purpose, impotence of mind, a want of self-respect, and of a proper sense of honor, and an indifference to the opinion of the world, and none can complain that you do him wrong. All that can be said will be, "The dog has returned to his vomit, and the sow that washed to her wallowing in the mire." And what of that! To him who can make up his mind to lie in such a bed, what others may say must be a matter of small moment.

Gentlemen; I hope better things of you. For, in view of the circumstances that surround you, how can I fear that you will be so unwise, so imbecile, so dead to honor, as, for the most paltry of all enjoyments, to forgo the advantages of your present position—to lose the opportunity of intellectual improvement and academic distinction—to disappoint the cherished hopes of parents and friends at home—to forfeit the respect of your associates—to lose your place in a society which tasks its resources to minister delight to the student's life—and to exchange the favoring smile of beauty for the glance of scorn and the frown of disgust! When good and evil are both set before you—not in remote prospect, but in immediate enjoyment or suffering, you cannot hesitate which to choose. "You have begun well: what hinders you to continue?" Go on then. "Be not weary of well doing." Persevere to the end; and, if you carry away nothing else from this place, you will bear with you the honors of victory in the first struggle of that long warfare between Reason and Passion, which is to continue through life, and on the event of which depend all hopes of happiness in this life, and in the life to come.