

THE YOUNG MAN LEAVING HOME

by **John Angell James**, 1844
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Introduction

The time of a young man's leaving home always a critical period

The sources of danger to young men away from home

The progressive manner and successive steps by which many young men are led astray

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True religion considered as a means of usefulness

True religion considered as a preparation for superintending a home of your own upon earth, and for going to an eternal home in heaven

Several classes of young men specially addressed—

the **traveler** by sea or land,

the **orphan**,

the **pious** youth,

the **prodigal**

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INTRODUCTION

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones." Proverbs 3:5-8

A youth leaving home! There is something a little melancholy in the idea. Home is one of the most delightful of words, and it is no wonder that it should have become the subject of poetry and song. There is music in the sound; and in every heart that is not yet corrupted—there is a chord that vibrates to the note. It will ever awaken a long train of associations and recollections—painful or pleasant—as may have been the conduct of the individual by whom the word is repeated. It is at home that parents and children, brothers and sisters—as long as Providence permits them to dwell together—mingle in the sweet fellowship of domestic bliss.

But you, whose eye is ranging over these pages, are leaving, or have left, your father's house. You are going, or are gone, away from home. I sympathize with you in the sorrows of that tearful hour of your existence. Well do I remember, even at this distance from the time, the scene which my own home presented, when I finally left it, to **embark on life's stormy and dangerous ocean**. My **mother**, one of the kindest and tenderest that ever bore that dear relationship, unable to sustain the parting, had retired to the garden—my **sisters** wept—my **father** walked silently by my side to the edge of the town, where I was to take horse and ride to meet the coach that was to carry me to London—while **my own heart** was almost overwhelmed with emotion, under the idea that I was leaving home, to encounter the anxieties, dangers, and responsibilities of a new and untried course!

In any aspect of the event, it is no trifling or inconsiderable transaction—to leave the scenes, the friends, and the guardians of our childhood—to leave that spot, and its dear inhabitants, with which are associated all our earliest reminiscences—to go from beneath the immediate inspection of a mother's anxious love, and the protection of a father's watchful care, and expose ourselves to the perils, privations, and sorrows that await the traveler on his journey through this world! You ought, as a child, to feel a pang as your **mother** presses you to her bosom, and sobs out her parting exclamation, "Goodbye, my son!" You ought to feel pensive and sad, as your **father** squeezes your hand, and turns from you with a heart too full to speak. You ought, as you cross the threshold of that habitation where you have been nurtured so tenderly, to cast a longing, lingering look behind. You would be unworthy of your parents' love, and of home's endearments—if you could leave them without emotion.

Still, however, these feelings are to be guided and limited by reflection. You cannot always remain at home—to be nursed in the lap of domestic enjoyment. You have a part to act in the great drama of life—and must leave home to prepare to act it well. It is the appointment of God that man should not live in idleness—but gain his bread by the sweat of his brow; and you must be placed out in the world to get yours by honest industry. In some few cases, the son remains with the father, and prepares for his future calling at home; but in by far the greater number of instances it is necessary for young men to learn their trade or profession, and to procure their livelihood, by being placed with strangers at a distance from home. This is your case, and in kind solicitude for your welfare, this little volume has been prepared, and is now presented to you, with the prayers and best wishes of the author.

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The Time of a Young Man's Leaving Home is Always a Critical Period

Critical, I mean, as regards his **character**. Yes, imminently so. You are aware that, besides your attention to business, and acquiring a knowledge of the trade or profession to which that attention is directed, there is such a thing as the "formation of character"—or fixed habits of action, arising out of fixed principles. A man may be a good tradesman, and yet a bad man; though, generally, good moral character has a very favorable influence in forming the good tradesman. I wish you to direct your most serious attention to the importance of character—moral and religious character. What is everything else without character? How worthless is any man without this! He may have wealth, but he can neither enjoy it, improve it, nor be respected for it, without character. But it very rarely happens that those who begin life with a bad character, succeed in the great competition of this world's business. Multitudes, with every advantage at starting, have failed through bad conduct, while others, with every disadvantage, have succeeded by the aid and influence of good character.

Character for life—and for eternity too—is usually formed in youth! Set out with this idea written upon your very hearts, in order that it may be ever exerting its powerful influence on your conduct. As is the youth, such, in all probability, will be the man—whether he be good or bad. And as character is generally formed in youth, so it is not less generally formed at that period of youth when young people leave home. The first year or two after leaving his father's house, is the most eventful period of all a young man's history—and what he is at the expiration of the second or third year after leaving the parental abode, that, in all probability, he will be, as a tradesman for this world—and as an immortal being in the next! This should make you pause and consider. Before you read another line,

I entreat you to think of it. Perhaps you doubt it. Attend then to what I have to offer in support of the assertion.

Does not reason suggest, that such a transition as leaving home, will powerfully influence the remainder of your life? You cannot leave so many restraints, so much inspection and guardianship, and come into such new circumstances, at an age when the heart is so susceptible, and the character so pliable, without receiving a bias—it is impossible. **New temptations assail you, which, if not at once and successfully resisted, will acquire a permanent ascendancy!**

Your parents, who have gone before you in the path of life, know the fact, and tremble. It makes their hearts ache to think of sending you away from home. You know not, you cannot know, what was the deep and silent trouble of your father's heart—the painful solicitude of your mother's gentle spirit—in the prospect of your leaving them. They sat hour after hour by the fire-side, or lay awake at night talking on the subject, and mingled their tears as they thought of other youths they know, whose ruin was dated from the hour of their departure from home. "Oh!" they exclaimed in anguish, "if this our son should be like them, and become a prodigal too, it would bring down our grey hairs in sorrow to the grave! O, that we could that we could keep him at home under our own care—but we cannot!" They then fell upon their knees, and by united prayer gained relief and comfort to their aching hearts, while commending you to Him, who has in ten thousand instances been the guide and protector of youth. While your mother, good woman! as she packed your trunk, dropped her fast flowing tears upon your clothes, placed the Bible among them, and sighed out the petition, "Oh my son, my son! Great God, preserve him from all evil."

Ministers have seen the danger of youths leaving home, most painfully exemplified in young men who have come from a distant town, recommended perhaps by parents to their care, and who for a while attended their ministry. At first their places in the sanctuary were regularly filled twice a day, and while the novelty lasted, they appeared to hear with attention and interest—this soon diminished, and they

became listless and neglectful; then their seat was occasionally empty on a sabbath evening; then habitually so; until at length, giving up the morning, or only strolling in occasionally with some mirthful companion, they proclaimed the dreadful fact, that they had fallen into the dangers incident to young men upon leaving home—and the next news concerning them, perhaps, was a letter from a heart-broken parent, confirming the worst fears of the minister, by asking him to make effort to snatch their son from his evil companions and profligate courses.

Instances innumerable have occurred, in which youths, who, while dwelling under their father's roof, have been the joy and the hope of their parents, have, on leaving home and entering into the world—exhibited a melancholy and dreadful transformation of character. Some by slow degrees have passed from virtue to vice, while others have made the transition so suddenly, as if by one mighty bound they had resolved to reach the way of the ungodly. In either case, the bitterest disappointment has been experienced by those who have had to contrast the prodigal abroad—with the sober youth at home.

Youthful reader, I assure you that this is no uncommon case, but, on the contrary, so frequent, as to make every considerate parent tremble at sending away his son, especially to the large provincial towns, and most of all to that mighty sink of iniquity—the metropolis.

What, then, should be the state of your mind, and your reflections, upon reading such an account as this? "Is it so, that on leaving a father's house, so many young men, who were once virtuous and promising, have become vicious and profligate. How much does it become me to pause and reflect, lest I add another to the number! What was there in their circumstances and situation so dangerous to virtue, that I may not expect to find in mine? Or what is there in my habits and resolutions, which was not, in their better days, in them? Did they fall, and shall I be so confident of steadfastness, as to dismiss fear and despise caution? Do I recoil from vice? So did they, when, like me, they were at home. Do I shudder at grieving my parents by misconduct? So did they, when, like me, they had their parents

continually before them. Am I going forth high in the confidence of my parents, and the esteem of my friends? So did they. Yet how cruelly have they disappointed every hope that was formed concerning them! And what is there in my habits and purposes that shall prevent me from imitating their example? Oh, if this should be the case! If I would add another to the victims of leaving home! If my reputation, now happily so fair, should be tarnished, faded, lost! If I, of whom hopes are entertained that I am becoming a Christian, should turn out a prodigal, a profligate! Dreadful apostasy. Great God, prevent it!"

Could I induce you thus to reflect, I would have hope of you; while a contrary spirit of self-dependence and confidence, would lead me to expect in you another proof that the time of a youth's leaving home is most critical.

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The Sources of DANGER to Young Men Away from Home

It is well to know **what** these are, and **where** they lie—that you may know how to avoid them. Ignorance on such a subject, would be itself one of the chief dangers. In many cases—to know our perils is itself one way of avoiding them. Steadily, then, contemplate the following—

1. You are in danger of falling into evil—from the removal of parental inspection, admonition, and restraint. It must be admitted, that home itself is sometimes a scene of peril to morals and true religion. In some homes, young people see and hear very little but what is calculated to do them harm. Parental example is on the side of sin, and almost everything that is said or done is of a nature likely to produce impressions unfavorable to piety—and perhaps even to morality. Where this is the state of things, removal is a benefit, and not a few have reason to be thankful for having been transplanted from such unChristian houses, into families where God is feared and piety is exemplified. If this be your case, rejoice in the dispensation of Providence, which has rescued you from such imminent danger, and planted you in a soil more congenial for the cultivation of true piety. Happy youth! to be thus snatched from the vortex of perdition at home, and brought into the way of salvation abroad. O prize your privileges, and improve your opportunities!

Many a young man, who, at the time of leaving home, wept over the necessity which caused him to leave the scenes of his childhood, and to go from beneath the wing of his parents, has lived to consider it the brightest era of his life, inasmuch as it took him away from scenes of moral danger, and led him to the means of grace and the path of eternal life. And in looking back upon the way of Providence, and upon his own feelings and ignorance of what awaited him,

has exclaimed, "You bring the blind in a way that they knew not, and lead them in paths that they have not known; you make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight."

This, however, is not applicable to all families. If there are some parents who take no care about the religious or even moral character of their children, who neither set them good examples, nor deliver to them any instruction, nor impose upon them any restraint—but who allow them the unchecked gratification of their passions, and the unreproved commission of sin—there are many others who act a wiser and a better part. In most instances, parents are moral; in many they are pious—and while the former are anxious to keep their sons from vice, and train them to virtue—the latter go farther, and endeavor to bring them up in the fear of the Lord.

Many who will read these pages know this by experience. You have been brought up in habits of rigid morality. Your parents have been solicitous to form your character on a right basis. You have been long familiar with the voice of instruction, admonition, and warning. You have been the constant subject of a parental concern which you could neither be ignorant of, nor mistake. If you were seen in company with a stranger, or with a youth of doubtful character, you were questioned and warned. If you brought home a book, it was examined. If you stayed out at night later than usual, you saw a mother's anxious eye turned upon you, and heard a father's voice, saying, "My son, why so late, where have you been?" In short, you felt yourself within the range of an ever-present inspection, and under the pressure of a never-relaxing restraint. The theater and other places of pollution were strictly forbidden—and indeed you felt little inclination to visit even the environs of those haunts of vice. Morning and evening you heard the Scriptures read, and the voice of prayer ascend to God, and ascend for you. With such examples, under such instruction, and amid such scenes—you had no opportunity, and felt no disposition, to be immoral. Sometimes you thought, perhaps, that the restraint was too severe, and the care too fastidious; but then you said, "It is all for my good," and you submitted to it.

All this is now over—you have left, or are leaving home. The moment has arrived, or is past, and will never be forgotten, when those arms which sustained your infant frame were thrown around your neck, and pressed you to the bosom that nourished you, while a mother's faltering voice exclaimed, "Farewell, my boy;" and a father, always kind—but kinder then than ever, prolonged the sad adieu, and said, "My son, I can watch over you no longer. May the God whose providence removes you from your father's house, be your protector, and preserve you from the evils of this sinful world. Remember, that, though **my** eye cannot see you—**His** can, and ever does. Fear Him!"

And there, young man, you now are, where your parents' hearts trembled to place you, amid the snares and perils of this evil world; where your father's inspection cannot reach you—nor your mother's tearful eye behold you.

Perhaps you are in a family where no prayer is presented, nor even the form of true religion observed; where you are left to yourself, little or no care being taken of your morals or pious principles; and where, provided you serve your employers with industry and honesty—you may choose your own companions, recreations, and places of resort.

Or, if more favorably situated, and your lot is cast in a pious family, still what is the instruction of a employer, compared with that of a father—or the care of a mistress compared with that of a mother? Away from home, a wickedly inclined youth will find opportunities for the gratification of his evil propensities in situations the most friendly to virtue. His wicked heart, rejoicing in the absence of his parents, will make that absence an incentive to sin. Ever and always the whisper will come from within, "My father is not here to see it; my mother will not know it; I am not under inspection now, restraint is over; I can go where I like, associate with whom I please, and fear neither rebuke nor reproach."

O young man, think of the unutterable baseness of such conduct as this. Ought you not to despise yourself, if you could thus basely, as well as wickedly, take advantage of a father's absence—to do that which you know would excite

his strongest reprobation, and afflict him with the bitterest grief, if he were present. Yet multitudes are thus base and wicked, and have gone from their parents to ruin themselves forever! Act, young man, act as you would do—if you were conscious that your father's eye were upon you!

2. Your danger is increased by the spirit of independence and self-confidence, connected, as of course it must be, with much ignorance and inexperience, which young men are apt to assume, when they leave their father's house, and go out into the world.

"Paternal rule is now over; my parents are not at hand to be consulted or obeyed; and if they were, it is time for me to think and act for myself. I am my own master now. I am a young man, and no longer a child. I am capable of judging, discriminating, and determining between right and wrong. I have the right, and will exercise it, of forming my own standard of morals, selecting my own models of character, and laying down my own plans of action. Who has authority to interfere with me?"

Such probably are your thoughts, and they are encouraged by many around you, who suggest that you are not always to go under parental care—but ought now to assert your liberty, and act like a man. Yes, and how many have employed and abused this liberty to the most criminal and fatal purposes—it has been a liberty to destroy all the habits of virtue formed at home—to subvert all the principles planted with such care by parental solicitude—and to rush into all the evil practices, against which the voice of warning had been raised from boyhood.

Many young men have no sooner been freed from parental restraint, and become their own masters, than they have hurried to every place of amusement, resorted to every species of wicked entertainment, initiated themselves into all the mysteries of iniquity, and with unwholesome curiosity to know, what it is bliss to be ignorant of—have entered into fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

Happy, happy had they been, had they considered that an

independence which sets them free from parental advice and control—is the bane of piety, morality, and felicity—and has proved, where it has been assumed, the ruin for both worlds of multitudes of once hopeful youths. Wise is that young man, and blessed in all probability will he be, who, though he has left his father's house, and has arrived at the age of maturity, feels it his privilege, as well as his duty—to look up to his parents as his counselors, his comforters, and, in some respects, his rulers; who allows the restraints of home to follow him abroad; and who, amid the dangerous intricacies of life, is thankful to accept the offices of a judicious father—to be the guide of his youth.

Independence of one kind, I mean financial support, is that which every youth, sensible of what is due to himself, as well as to his parents, will be eager to acquire. It is a noble and generous ambition that dictates the wish to be self-supported. Some young men have disgraced themselves in the estimation of all who knew them, by depending on upon the industry and resources—and those but limited too—of parents, whose delight in their children made them willing to endure any labor and suffer any privations on their account. I know nothing more base, or cruel, than for a youth thus to take advantage of the strength of parental love, and to keep a father chained to the oar of labor, and to drain him of his last dollar—to support himself in idleness, or to supply the means of his luxurious extravagance. Disdain, young man, the thought of living by the sweat of your father's brow, and the wear and tear of his flesh and blood, his bones and muscles. Be industrious and frugal, that as soon as possible you may be, in this respect, your own master, and your own supporter.

3. The numerous incentives to vice with which every place—but especially the metropolis and large provincial towns, abound, and the opportunities of concealment which are to be found there—are a source of great danger.

At the head of all these must be placed the **THEATER**, which is there to be found in all its most powerful attractions and most destructive fascinations. Nothing too strong, or too bad, can be said of the injurious tendency of the stage; nor too earnest or impassioned in the way, and with the intent,

of warning young men from venturing within its precincts. It is emphatically, and by way of eminence—the broad road and wide gate that lead to destruction!

It is idle to talk of what the drama and the stage may, in the hands of moralists, become. I speak not of playhouses in the land of Utopia—but of such as now are to be found in ours, and of such as you, my reader, will attend, if you go to any.

The staple matter of which the ordinary run of dramatic representations are composed, is altogether adapted to corrupt the youthful mind—by appealing to the most inflammable, powerful, and dangerous of its passions. 'Tragedy', with whatever fine passages and occasional lofty sentiment it may be adorned, is usually calculated to produce pride, ambition, and revenge. While 'comedy', such as is most suited to the public taste, and therefore most in demand, is the school for intrigue, lust, and licentiousness. It is not, however, the subject matter only of the play itself that is corrupting—but the representation of it upon the stage, with all the accompaniments of the theater. Not only is the lesson wicked—but the teacher and the school-fellows are wicked too. It is wicked in every way—borrowing every possible aid to render it still worse—it is vice recommended by the charms of music, painting, architecture, oratory, and eloquence—with all that is fascinating in female beauty, and dazzling in elegant costume.

Think of the audience—that many of them are honest, virtuous, and respectable members of society, I allow; but how large a portion of it is of a contrary description! Is there anywhere such a collection of the wicked, such a condensation of vice—as at the theater? Is it not there that the immoral meet to make their sinful engagements? Is not the profligate, of whatever grade or kind, sure to meet his partner there? Is it not the harlot's resort, the place of convocation for those miserable beings, whose ways lead down to the chambers of death and the pit of destruction, and who there swarm in the lobbies, and crowd the benches?

It were easy to enumerate the evils, though they are many and great—to which frequenting the theater will expose you.

It is expensive—and will thus drain your finances. It leads to other expensive sins, such as drunkenness and debauchery, which, besides being evil themselves, will consume the fruits of your industry. It is sure to lead you into bad company. It generates a feverish imagination, and destroys a right balance of character. It raises the passions above their proper tone, and thus induces a dislike for those grave and serious subjects of life which have nothing but their simplicity and importance to recommend them. It kindles wicked and base appetites, and creates a constant hankering after their indulgence. It not only hardens the heart against true religion, so that a theater-loving man never becomes pious, until he is persuaded to abandon these amusements—but it gradually benumbs the conscience into an insensibility to good morals. Through the power of the unwholesome propensities, and ungovernable desires, which it produces—it often urges on to licentious conduct, so that a youth who frequents the playhouse is almost sure to fall a victim to the lips of the immoral woman, for "the lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil. But the result is as bitter as poison, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to hell."

Myriads of young men have had to date their ruin for both worlds from the fatal night, when, against the dissuasions of parents, and the remonstrances of conscience, they ventured within the walls of a theater! Let earnest, affectionate, importunate entreaty prevail then—to induce you to abstain from **this road to perdition!**

If you will not take my testimony, hearken to that which is furnished by witnesses more competent, from experience—to give evidence. It is said of Sir Matthew Hale, one of the greatest and most upright judges that ever sat on the bench, "that he was an extraordinary proficient at school, and for some time at Oxford; but the stage-players coming there, he was so much corrupted by seeing plays, that he almost wholly forsook his studies. By this he not only lost much time—but found that his head was thereby filled with vain images of things; and being afterwards sensible of the mischief of this, he resolved, upon his coming to London, never to see a play again—to which resolution he constantly

adhered."

Augustine, the celebrated Christian author, confesses, with a noble frankness—that it was at the theater he imbibed the venom which so corrupted his heart and polluted his life during his early years.

"There is no part of theatrical economy," says one, "with which I am unacquainted; and it is my personal and complete knowledge of that economy which forces upon me the conviction, that were another Ezekiel to arise, and another angel descend—to exhibit to him the greater and greater abominations of this land—he would reserve for the astonished and indignant prophet a display of the iniquities of a London theater, as the last and most fearful chambers of wickedness."

"As I was one day walking out," says an American preacher, "for my accustomed exercise, a gentleman passed me in his carriage, and invited me to ride with him. He is a man of wealth and distinction, and of an elevated and pious character. He came to the city when young, without friends, without money, without reputation, without any extrinsic means whatever of getting started in business. Soon after I took a seat with him, two young men on their way to the theater, with cigars in their mouths, dashed furiously past us. 'There,' said he, 'are two young men going fast to ruin!' This incident turned our conversation upon the expenses and the ruin of young men. He remarked, that most of the young men who came to live in Boston at the time he did, had already gone to ruin. I told him that the interest I felt in them prompted the inquiry, how it came to pass that he escaped, and by what means he had succeeded so well in life? He replied, that when he came to the city, he laid down some rules, which he had steadfastly observed. Among them were the following—That he would always attend public worship on the Sabbath; that he would never read loose and infidel writings, nor visit infidel meetings; that he would devote a portion of his time to some profitable study; that he would be always diligent and faithful in business, however discouraging things might look; that he would not frequent places for amusement; that he would form no alliance with any individuals, until he knew them to be safe

and virtuous companions; and that he would not go to the theater until he was forty-five years old, when he supposed he should be above the reach of any injury from that source.

Long before he reached that age he became a Christian man, and of course he now finds higher sources of pleasure than the theater—a place he never visited.

Another youth, who came to the city at the same time and from the same place with him, took lodgings at a house with some theater-going young men, was prevailed upon to go for once, then again, and again. He became loose in his principles and habits—one wrong step led to another, until he went headlong to ruin, and went to an early and infamous grave! And this, he remarked, had been the sad history of many who entered on and began the career in life with him."

I have no need, after this—to add anything, except it be to advise you never to do as some have done to their destruction, and that is—to go once, in order to judge for yourself. Do not taste the poison—to determine how you like it—and to form an opinion of its injurious power. Do not touch the fang of a serpent—to ascertain by examination the sharpness of its tooth. These are matters which it is safer and easier to decide by testimony; and a cloud of witnesses prove that of all the avenues to destruction—not one is more seductive or more certain, than the theater!

But besides the theater, how many other species of corrupt and corrupting amusement are to be found. Need I mention **GAMBLING** houses, brought down to the level of people of slender means, where the excitement of avarice, and the witchery of a love of play, is kept up—to the destruction of all sobriety of mind and industrious habits.

Is it necessary to speak of the places where young men meet to **SMOKE** cigars? It may seem to some to be trifling—but I know it is not, to say, that the first cigar a young man takes within his lips may become, and often does become, his first step in the career of vice. A cigar is with young people, the symbol of foppery, and swaggering,

and conceit. I knew a youth, the son of a minister, who acquired such a passion for this species of gratification, that it contributed to the ruin of his circumstances, as well as of his character. His income was limited, yet he became greatly in debt for cigars to the tobacconist, at whose house he used to meet a company of youths, as idle as himself. I always grieve and tremble over every young man of my acquaintance whom I see contracting this habit. It often leads to other and far worse things.

Then there are the public gardens, the parks, and the steam-boats to Richmond, to Gravesend, or to Greenwich, those alluring baits for sabbath-breaking, by which millions, as time rolls on, are caught in the snares of Satan, ever lying in wait to deceive and to decoy. "What harm can there be," it is said, "after we have been shut up all the week in a close street, hard at work—to go out on a fine summer day—to enjoy the clear sunshine, the fresh air, and the beauties of creation? Surely our Maker is not such a hard master as to refuse us gratifications so innocent and so healthful." And thus sabbath-breaking, which is a manifest violation of the laws of God, is defended by an appeal to his goodness. Probably there is no means of destroying pious principle, and of leading to immorality, more common than the **NEGLECT OF PUBLIC WORSHIP**. Let this season be taken from devotion, and given to pleasure, and the character is from that time open to all the inroads of sin, without any check.

BAD COMPANIONS are a source of danger. Perhaps more young men are ruined by this than by any other means that could be mentioned. Many who have left home with a character unsullied, and a mind not only comparatively pure—but really ignorant of the crooked ways of vice—who, simple, artless, and without deceit, would have shuddered at the temptation to any of the grosser acts of sin—have at length fallen sacrifices to the powerful influence of evil associates! Man is a social being, and the propensity for friendship is peculiarly strong in youth—the season when it requires to be watched with greater care than at any other, because of the greater force which it exerts in the formation of character.

Now and then we meet with a youth who is so engrossed with business, so intent on cultivating his mind, or so reserved in disposition, as to have no desire for companions; but by far the greater number are fond of society, and eager to enjoy it; and, if not extremely careful in the selection of their friends, are in imminent peril of choosing such as will do them harm. It is next to impossible, young man, for you to remain virtuous in wicked company. Good morals cannot long be retained in habitual communion with those who are mirthful and wicked. It is like carrying money into the company of thieves, who will be sure to rob you of it. Your good conduct will render them uneasy; it will reprove them, accuse them, and exasperate them; and they will never cease until they have made you as bad as themselves. The more agreeable, amiable, and intelligent they are, the more dangerous and ensnaring is their influence.

A youthful profligate, of elegant manners, lively humor, amiable temper, and intelligent mind—is **Satan's most polished instrument for ruining immortal souls!** Once give your company to such an associate, and you are in the coils of a serpent, or at any rate in the spell of the basilisk's deadly gaze—from which nothing but Omnipotence can pluck you! You may for some time be kept from imitating him in his excess of riot, and prevented by the last efforts of a yet surviving conscience—from going all his lengths in sin—but you are in the track of his footsteps, following at a distance, while he is perpetually looking back, and by smiles and beckonings rallying your courage, and cheering onward your yet timid and reluctant feet.

No evil companions are to be so much dreaded, as those who dwell under the same roof! How frequently is it the unhappy lot of young men piously brought up, and in every respect hopeful as to morality, and perhaps as to piety also—to be fixed in the same house—to eat at the same table—to sleep in the same room—as some youths of wicked and infidel principles. They are thus brought into immediate contact with sin, and exposed at once to all the virulence of its contagion! What strength of moral constitution does it require to resist the danger! They breathe the infected atmosphere—and continually touch the pestilential person!

Take the testimony of one who left his father's house strictly moral, and with much veneration for true religion—but whose dark and winding course led him at last into the vicinity of the gallows. "In my employer's house," says he, "there were three young men employed, besides myself. One of them, a mirthful, respectable youth, was a great favorite with my employer. He was my room-mate. Of course this led to friendship—and from him I received the first tendency to extravagance and dress, which laid the foundation of my ruin. He was extremely wasteful in his habits; but from the respectability of his connections, no suspicion was excited that his supplies were not equal to his expenses. By him I became gradually familiarized to scenes of pleasure and wastefulness, which soon exceeded my means of support; but I never dreamed of having recourse to dishonest means to meet expensive indulgences. I soon found that I would be involved in great financial difficulties, and began to withdraw from his company, and associated as much as possible with my brother and a cousin of mine in the city.

"A circumstance, however, soon occurred, which threw the 'forbidden fruit' in my way, and my integrity could not resist the temptation. After being about two years in my situation, I was sent, on one occasion, with a parcel to a gentleman, for which I was to receive the money. Such parts of the business had often fallen to my lot. On this occasion, however, in the hurry of business, without the least dishonesty of intention, I forgot to give the money to my employer, and did not discover the money in my pocket until some time afterwards, several weeks at least. I was much alarmed at the circumstance, and knew not how to act. I was afraid to mention the matter to any one. I determined to let the money remain where it was, and if no inquiry was made, at length to use the money for myself. Thus I fell into the snare."

And thus he commenced a career of dishonesty, the end of which will be related in the sequel.

I might mention another case, illustrative of the same fact, of the danger of a bad companion in the house; but happily the danger was escaped in this instance. I knew a youth,

whose parents felt the greatest concern for their child, whom they were about to situate away from home. He had been carefully educated, from his earliest years, in habits of morality and piety. His school had been selected with special reference to the plan laid down at home—for the formation of his character. But now this lovely youth (for he was most lovely) must leave home, and go out into the world. How anxiously did the father read the advertisements to find one which commanded all the advantages of a pious employer, and a godly minister! He succeeded, and a most excellent Christian he found, with whom to place his son. The family was what a Christian family should be; and the other apprentice staying with that family, also was supposed to be all that could be wished as a companion for a youth just leaving the parental roof—for he was the son of a minister, and unsuspected as to his moral principles.

Many months, however, had not passed before the minister received a letter from the heart-stricken mother of the first boy—to say she had heard from her child, stating that his soul was in imminent peril. He had been under pious impressions, and in much concern about his immortal welfare; but his companion, (the minister's son), proved to be a concealed infidel, concealed, I mean, from his the minister, and his employer. Nightly, when they retired to rest, was this deceiver and tempter instilling into the mind of his younger companion his artful objections against Christianity, and endeavoring to poison him with infidelity. His mind was assailed by one cavil after another, as he could bear them, until the poor boy unable any longer to endure his state of mind, yet afraid to disclose it, wrote home to his mother, exclaiming in an agony, "Oh, mother, I am lost, I am lost, unless you pray for me!" Horror-struck, she addressed the minister immediately upon the subject, and by their joint labors, and the blessing of God upon them, this youth was snatched from the fangs of the destroyer. He acted most wisely in making his parents acquainted with his situation, and imploring their counsel and help. A little longer, and he would, in all probability, have been carried off in triumph, and perhaps have been ruined for both worlds!

Oh, that I could select words sufficiently emphatic to express my entreaties to you to beware of evil companions

out of the house—but especially **in** it! Oh! could you see but a thousandth part of the miserable wrecks that have passed to the regions of unutterable woe by the influence of bad associates—what a commentary would their damnation be upon the passage—"A companion of fools shall be destroyed!"

WICKED WOMEN are as much to be dreaded as bad men—and far more so! I have known some who have been in great jeopardy from female servants. It is of the greatest consequence that a young man should be upon his guard against this danger, and not allow himself to take, or receive, the smallest possible liberty that would entrench upon the most delicate modesty. Profligacy and misery to a vast amount have been the result of a lack of caution in this matter. Towards young women of this description, be always kind—but never familiar; never joke with them; keep them at a proper distance, by keeping yourself so. Not a few have been lost to morality—by not watching against this danger.

Also, how are our towns infested with those miserable women, who, in many cases, are the victims of seduction—and horribly avenge themselves upon their betrayers, by becoming seducers in return! Youthful reader, be upon your guard against this peril to your health, your morals, your soul. Go where you will, this snare is spread for your feet. Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation. Set a strict guard upon your senses, your imagination, your passions. Once yield to temptation, and you are undone—purity is then lost, and, sunk from self-esteem, you may give yourself up to commit all vileness with greediness.

DRINKING PARTIES, though not as common as some other snares, are still sufficiently prevalent to be pointed out as a source of danger. Happily for the morals of our country, an alcoholic is no longer regarded with approval in the better classes of society. Still it is an object of ambition with some misguided youths—to be able to drink alcohol in moderation. What a low and sensual aim. Young man, as you would not lie down in the grave of a drunkard, worn out by disease, and closing your miserable career in poverty and wretchedness—beware of the filthy, degrading, and

destructive habit of drinking! Remember the words of the wisest of men—"Who has anguish? Who has sorrow? Who is always fighting? Who is always complaining? Who has unnecessary bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? It is the one who spends long hours in the taverns, trying out new drinks. Don't let the sparkle and smooth taste of wine deceive you. For in the end it bites like a poisonous serpent—it stings like a viper. You will see hallucinations, and you will say crazy things. You will stagger like a sailor tossed at sea, clinging to a swaying mast. And you will say—They hit me, but I didn't feel it. I didn't even know it when they beat me up. When will I wake up so I can have another drink?"

Study this inimitable and graphic picture of drinking and its consequences. Begin life with a horror of drunkenness; acquire a fear and dread of wine. It is calculated that fifty thousand drunkards die yearly in this country—by insanity and pauperism! Three-fourths of the crimes of the land are the consequences of drunkenness! A large proportion of drunkards begin this dreadful habit in youth. I again say, and with all possible emphasis, begin life with a horror of drunkenness! Watch against a love of wine. As one who has practiced total abstinence for three years, I can, and do recommend it to all people in health, and especially to youth. The young man who has acquired a relish for wine; who always drinks it when he can get it; who drinks as much as is given him, or he can afford to purchase; who avails himself of the dinner or supper party—to go as far as he can without actual intoxication—is already an incipient drunkard. And if he does not stop at once, and practice total abstinence, or, at any rate, watch his propensity, and lay down rules of the most rigid temperance, will, in all probability, become a confirmed drunkard!

IV. Perhaps, the discomfort of your situation exposes you to perils. It is not to be expected by any youth who has had the blessing of a comfortable home, that he should find the same degree or kind of provision made for his enjoyment in any situation in which, on going out into the world, he may be placed. Oftentimes the very reverse occurs, and his new residence presents a melancholy contrast to the house of his father. Perhaps you, my reader, may be thus circumstanced. Your place of abode is so utterly

comfortless, that you can scarcely think of home without tears. It is not only that your food is coarse or scanty, your lodging shoddy, and your work hard. You could bear all this, if your privations were made up by the kindness and sympathy of your employer, and your labors were softened by his expressed or obvious satisfaction. But it happens he is a tyrant, whom nobody can satisfy or conciliate, or his wife is an overbearing or nagging woman, whom nothing can please. Many a time you retire to your hard bed, and ill-furnished room, with a spirit discouraged, and a heart half broken.

Oh what a contrast is this cold unfeeling and grinding conduct—to the love of a fond mother, and the solicitude of a kind father! In such a situation, you are in danger of several things likely to be injurious to your moral welfare and future prosperity. Some have been induced by the pressure of their misery to run away. In an unhappy hour, they have listened to the voice of temptation, and have suddenly burst the bonds which they could not unloose, and cast off the yoke which they felt to be intolerable, and run away. This is a desperate and dreadful remedy; and has, in most cases, proved a ruinous one. Never let such a thought be entertained by you for a moment. Bear any unkindness, oppression, and misery—rather than do this.

A youth who runs away from his agreed upon employment, is usually a blighted character for life. He is sunk in his own estimation, and in that of everyone else. What anxiety does such a step bring on his parents, and on all his other friends! Remain then in your place—your term of apprenticeship will soon expire; it is not a captivity for life. Endeavor to sustain your ill treatment with courage and patience. **Meekness may vanquish your oppressor.**

But perhaps you are a clerk, and not an apprentice, and as you do not dwell in the house of your employer, you are not exposed to the same kind of discomfort and annoyance which those suffer, who do. You live in private lodgings. Your perils are therefore of another kind. Instead of being now surrounded with all the dear companions of home, and delighting in that busy scene of genuine love and tender services, you dwell solitarily among strangers. When the

business of the day is over, you go to a cheerless and silent abode. No mother's smiling countenance welcomes you to the fireside; no father's cheerful voice tells or asks the events of the day; no brother or sister calls you by name, and blithely sports with you. Instead of this, you receive no attention but that which is bought with money. You enter your lonely room, eat your joyless meal, and in sadness think of home and days gone by.

Now there is danger here—danger of seeking companions who may be unfit; danger of going out to find amusement in places of wicked resort; or of adopting a course of reading that will only pollute the mind. It is impossible to overrate the peril of a young man who has lately left his father's house, and is living in solitary lodgings in one of our large provincial towns, and especially in the metropolis. If he has not piety to preserve him, or fixed moral principle, or a love of reading and a thirst for knowledge—so as to make books his companions—he is in great temptation! With all the sources of sinful pleasure open around him, and in the midst of a multitude hastening to drink their corruptive waters; with all the seductions near that appeal to every sense, every appetite, and every taste; it is more than probable he will be drawn from his gloomy abode—to those scenes, where all the lights of fashion, folly, and ruin are blazing. The first scruples of conscience being subdued, the temptation being once successful, continuance and advance seem almost necessary.

In addition to the dreariness of solitude, he has now the pangs of self-reproach to bear. And can he sit there night after night—to hear the accusations of that 'internal monitor' whose indignant rebuke he has provoked, and the sentence of that severe judge whose condemnation he has procured? No! He must go again to the sounds of revelry to drown the voice—and to the scenes of mirth to lose the sight—of his dreadful reprovener. A young man in lodgings is thus in a situation where nothing but decided piety—or strong moral principle—can be expected to preserve him from temptation.

V. There is another danger to which your new situation may expose you, against which you should be cautioned, and directed to exercise the greatest vigilance; and that is—**the**

violation of the rule of HONESTY. If placed in a retail shop, money will be continually passing through your hands, and much uncounted cash will be within your reach. The temptation may, perhaps, in certain circumstances arise—to appropriate a part of this to your own use. It may be your supply of pocket money is short, and you find yourself below some of your acquaintances in the means of procuring clothes, books or amusements. When the prospect of concealment presents itself, and the pressure of necessity is urgent, especially if aided by the hope and intention of refunding at some future time what you purloin—you are in imminent peril of the sin of embezzlement. Many, very many, have fallen into the snare, and have had their character and prospects blasted forever!

Enter life determined, by God's help—to follow whatever things are honest, true, lovely, and of good report. Let the fear of God, united with the love of the noble, honorable, and dignified—prevent you from ever appropriating to yourself a farthing of your employer's property. Even should you not be detected, how degraded will you feel, if you have in any instance acted the part of a pilferer! It is a painful thing for conscience to cry, "thief!" though a man may be spared the degradation of public exposure. On the other hand, how pleasant will be the recollection through life, that though exposed to many and strong temptations, your hands were pure from dishonesty. Be this your prayer, "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me."

An eminent Christian minister, in relating to me the events of his early life, mentioned, with a fervid glow of delight and thankfulness, the victory which he gained in youth over a strong temptation to commit an act of dishonesty. Some circumstances, which need not be here detailed, led him to the resolution of running away from the place where he was serving an apprenticeship. On leaving the house, which he did in the morning before the family were stirring, he had to pass through a small room in which his employer usually sat. On the table lay a small heap of gold, silver and copper, carelessly mixed together, from which, as he was quite sure it was uncounted, a small sum abstracted by himself would not be missed. He stopped and looked at it, and as he looked he coveted. The temptation was strong. He was

going out upon the wide world, with scarcely anything in his pocket. His stock of clothes was low—all he had was on his back, and in a bundle in his hand. He reasoned with himself about his scanty means, the certainty that anything he took would not be missed, and the probability of his being able to refund, in more prosperous days, what he might appropriate then, in the season of his necessity—but his better thoughts prevailed, and, gathering up his remaining principles of virtuous integrity, he exclaimed, "No, I am wronging my employer enough in leaving his service; I will not take his money too."

And with only a pittance in his pocket he went out to seek his fortune in the world; but still he had the testimony of his conscience, that, though a runaway, he was, as far as money was concerned, an honest youth. He assured me, that he had never ceased to reflect upon that triumph over temptation with pleasure and thankfulness. His future destiny, perhaps, hung upon that decision. Had he taken any of the money, his conscience might have been benumbed, his heart hardened, his self-respect lost, and his future character have become profligate and depraved.

Reader, you may not, I trust you will not, be placed exactly in the same circumstances of trial as this young man; but opportunities of embezzling your employer's property will often present themselves to you, if so disposed, and I hope you will ever have the principle to resist them.

There is nothing more likely to expose you to this danger than habits of **EXTRAVAGANCE**. If you should unhappily acquire a taste for expensive dress, or amusements, or wicked gratifications, you are in peril. Dishonesty often begins in **luxury**. A young man thinks he must be stylish, elegant, fashionable; he looks with envy on those whose means are more abundant than his own, and becomes restless and dissatisfied. He must, he will be equal to them in clothes, furnishings and diversions; but his salary, or his father's allowance, will not meet his needs, and then comes the temptation to embezzlement. Extravagance must have resources; and if they cannot be found by honest means, they will by dishonest ones. A love of ostentation in dress and diversions has led many to the gallows, or to the prison,

by prompting first to pilfering, and then to forgery. Be upon your guard then. Avoid extravagance. Dread all vanity in dress. Determine to live within your income. Begin life with the resolution to be neat and respectable—but not luxurious or extravagant. Be it your fixed purpose never to have an article until you can pay for it.

VI. I close this fearful list of perils, by mentioning **the prevalence of infidelity**, and the zeal and wily arts of its abettors and propagators, as forming another source of danger to youth. There never was an age when infidelity was more busy than it is now; not that it is now more generally professed by the thinking and intelligent portion of the community; quite the contrary. Literature and science, rank and fashion, pay far more external, though it may not be sincere, homage to religion, than they did in times gone by—infidelity as a profession is no longer the boast of those who occupy the high places of society. True religion is obviously gaining ground among them. But the efforts of infidels to diffuse their principles among the common people and middling classes are peculiarly energetic just now. The subtleties of Hume, the pompous deism of Bolingbroke, and the artful insinuations of Gibbon—have given place to the ribaldries of Paine, and recently to the absurdities of Owen. The system, if system it may be called, of the latter, is obtruded upon public notice under the guise of an attractive misnomer, and pushed forward with a zeal which reminds us of the activity of its parent—the father of lies.

Absurd in its principles, contradictory to every man's sound judgment, and repudiated even by the conscience of its abettors, infidelity cannot long impose upon the credulity of even the laboring classes, among whom it has yet been chiefly successful. Amid a jargon of pretended metaphysics, at war with the first principles of sound logic and our moral constitution, it announces as its leading dogma, that man is entirely the creature of circumstances; is in no sense the author of his opinions and volitions; nor the founder or supporter of his own character. If this be correct, he is a mere machine, gifted with faculties which can be of no use to him; without freedom, without responsibility, without conscience; to whom it is useless to offer inducements, and on whom instruction is wasted; so circumstanced by

necessity, that he can neither originate nor sustain any self-improvement; a being, in reference to whom law is mockery, sin impossible, and punishment injustice.

As if it were not enough to shock the public mind by a system so monstrous, the public taste, and all our social feelings are outraged, by the unblushing avowal of its author, that it is his design and wish to abolish the institution of marriage, and reconstruct society upon the basis of the unlegalized cohabitation of the sexes and the unrestricted freedom of divorce. Absurd and demoralizing as such a system is, it is popular with many; the reason is obvious, its very immorality proves to them its recommendation. If they can believe it, they feel that, commit what crimes they may, accountability is gone, and remorse is extinguished—the blame rests not on them, nor any sin whatever—but on the circumstances which led to it—a short way to be very wicked, and yet very easy. Young man, can you believe it? No, your reason revolts from it, and so would your heart, too, if you could witness the moral ravages it has committed. "Call it not infidelity—call it devilism; for it has made me more a devil than a man," exclaimed a poor dying man in my neighborhood—to one of our town missionaries who visited him on his death-bed. "I got into company that led me to infidelity and to drinking. I rejected the Bible, denied the Savior, and persuaded myself that there was no hereafter; and as the result, acted the part of a bad father, and a bad husband. I have the testimony of my employer, that I was a steady and respectable man until I listened to the infidels; but since that time I have become a vagabond, and they who formerly knew me, have shunned me in the streets."

Such is the testimony of a dying victim and martyr of infidelity—and a similar confession has been made by many others. I have seen man moral happy and useful, so long as he professed true religion—and have seen him in misery poverty and ruin, since he has thrown it off—I have heard the impassioned accents of his heart-broken wife, so far as weakness allowed her to be impassioned, exclaiming, as she looked at her miserable companion, "O sir, he has been a destroyed man, ever since he went among the infidels!" Such is infidelity.

It must be obvious, that between immorality and infidelity there is a close connection. A young man falls into temptation, and commits sin—instead of repenting, as is his duty and his interest, he in many cases attempts to quiet his conscience by persuading himself that Christianity is all hypocrisy, and the Bible untrue. His infidelity now prepares him to go greater lengths in sin—thus vice calls in the aid of error, and error strengthens vice, while both together lead their victim to ruin and misery. To guard yourselves against such dangers, study well the evidences of Christianity; but above all, let the power of true religion be felt in your heart, as well as the evidence of it perceived by your judgment. True religion in the heart is the only thing to be relied upon as a defense against the attacks of infidels, and the influence of their principles. But this will be insisted upon at greater length in a subsequent chapter.

Such are the most common and pressing dangers to which youth are exposed on leaving the protection of their parental habitation, and going from beneath the sheltering wing of paternal care. "I send you forth," said the Savior to his disciples, "as sheep among wolves;" and the same remark may be made by parents to their children, substituting the term lambs for sheep—when they place them out in this wicked and ensnaring world. It has been a dark day in the annals of myriads of families, when a son bade adieu to his parents, and commenced his probation and his struggles in the great business of human life. The tears that fell on that occasion were a sad presage, though unknown at the time, of others that were to flow in long succession over the follies, vices, and miseries of that unhappy youth. The history of ten thousand prodigal sons; the untimely graves of ten thousand broken-hearted parents; and the deep and heavy woes of ten thousand dishonored families, attest the fact of the dangers that await a youth on leaving home—and he is most in danger, who is ignorant of what awaits him, or who, on being informed, treats the subject with indifference, smiles at the fears of his friends, and feels no fear for himself.

Young man, there is hope of you if this representation shall awaken alarm, produce self-distrust, and excite vigilance

and caution. Inexperienced and rash—with all your appetites sharpening—and all your passions strengthening—with a lively imagination—an immoderate or unwholesome curiosity—and a heart susceptible—eager to act for yourself—panting to try your scarcely fledged wings on leaving the nest—and perhaps ambitious of distinction—you are in imminent peril of the lusts of the flesh and of the mind. All but yourself are aware of, and concerned about your danger. Pause, and consider what you may become—an ornament of the profession you have chosen, a respectable member of society, a holy professor of true religion, a useful citizen of your country, a benefactor of your species, and a light of the world.

But according to the height to which you may rise, is the depth to which you may sink—for as the bottom of the ocean is supposed to be proportioned in measurement to the tops of the mountains, so the dark gulfs of sin and perdition into which you may plunge, sustain a similar relation to the summits of excellence and happiness to which you may ascend. Your capacity for ruin is equal to what it is for salvation. Survey for a moment the sphere which you may occupy and fill up with misery, desolation, and ruin. See what opportunities of destruction are within your reach, and to what suicidal and murderous havoc sin may lead you—if you give yourself up to its influence and government.

You may destroy your physical constitution by a more slow but not less sure process, than if you swallowed arsenic, or discharged a pistol at your heart. There are vices of the flesh that bring their own immediate punishment—in the diseases which they entail. The martyrs of licentiousness are far more numerous, and the amount of their sufferings inconceivably greater, than the martyrs for true religion. Millions die annually, the victims of drunkenness and debauchery, who long before the grave receives them to its dark domain, present a hideous and loathsome mass of corruption. Your financial interests may be ruined. Many on whom the morning of life dawned in brightness, and its prospects opened in beauty, have seen their sun suddenly go down, and all before them covered with clouds, and ravaged with the storms of adversity; not that Providence was against them, not that man was unjust to them—but they were the

destroyers of their own interests, by habits of extravagance, indolence, and indulgence, acquired in youth.

You can ruin your reputation. After building up with great care your good name, for some years, and acquiring respect and esteem from those who knew you, "in one single hour, by yielding to some powerful temptation, you may permanently fix a dark stain upon your character, which no tears can ever wash away, or repentance remove—but which will cause you to be read and known of all men, until the grave receives you out of their sight. You may render yourself an object of the universal disgust and abhorrence of the pious—and be the taunt and scorn of the wicked; so that wherever you turn your eyes, you will find none to bestow upon you a single smile of complacency. How many in this condition, bitterly realizing that, 'without a friend, the world is but a wilderness,' have, in a paroxysm of desperation, committed suicide.

Your **intellect**, strong by nature, and capable of high cultivation, may, like a fine flower, be allowed to run wild by neglect—be trodden down by brute lusts—or be broken by violence. Your **affections**, given to be your delight by virtuous exercise on right objects, may be all perverted so as to become like so many demons, possessing and tormenting your soul, because they are set on things forbidden, and indulged to excess. Your **conscience**, granted to be your monitor, guide, and friend—may be wounded, benumbed, seared, until it is insensible, silent, and deaf—and of no use in warning you against sin, in restraining or reproving you for it. In short, you may destroy your immortal **soul**; and what ruin is like that of the soul—so immense, so horrible, so irretrievable? You may break the hearts of your **parents**; make your brothers and sisters ashamed to own you; be a nuisance and pest to **society**; a bane to your country; the corrupter of youthful morals; the seducer of female virtue; the consumer of the property of your friends; and, to reach the climax of your mischief, you may be the Apollyon (the destroyer) of the circle of immortal souls in which you move, sending some to perdition before you reach it yourself, and causing others to follow you to the bottomless pit—where you will never escape the sight of their torments—nor the sound of their

curses!

How great the power, how malignant the virulence of sin, that can spread its influence so widely, and exert its force with such deadly effect, not only destroying the sinner himself—but involving others in his ruin! No man goes alone to perdition, no one perishes alone in his iniquity! This is a consideration which every transgressor should regard—he sustains the character not only of a suicide—but of a murderer, and the worst of all murderers, for he is the murderer of souls!

What a critical position you now occupy, between the capability of rising to so much excellence—or sinking to ruin so deep, and misery so intense! Reflect! Oh that you were wise! that you understood this! that you would consider your eternal end!

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The Young Man Leaving Home

by John Angell James, 1844

THE SUCCESSIVE STEPS OF GOING ASTRAY

If it is a melancholy fact, which the history of innumerable families can verify, that many young men, who leave home in every respect moral and respectable—become wicked, and end their course in profligacy and ruin—an inquiry presents itself as to the steps which lead to this dreadful reverse of character and circumstances. It rarely, if ever, happens, that the heart throws off at once all the restraints of virtue, and plunges suddenly into the depths of vice. It is not by one stride, that the moral youth passes from sober habits at home to those of an opposite nature abroad—but generally by slow and successive steps. The judgment and conscience would recoil from a temptation which proposed to him to become profligate at once; and if he ever becomes proficient in vice, he must be led on by insensible degrees, and little by little make advances in the way of wickedness, and in the counsels of the ungodly. This is what is meant by the deceitfulness of sin.

What individual who ever attained to enormity of wickedness, foresaw or conjectured the end of his career? When the messenger of Heaven disclosed to Hazael the Syrian, the wickedness of his future character, he indignantly exclaimed, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this?" It was a burst of honest indignation. At that time he was incapable of the atrocities which it was foretold he would one day commit, and his whole nature rose in an expression of sincere abhorrence. He knew not the deceitfulness of his heart, or the corrupting influences of ambition and power. He was led on by a gradual progress in his guilty career, until the events of his history surpassed in criminality the picture drawn by the prophet. Who that ever ended his days at the gallows, or in the felon's exile, would at one period of his life have thought it possible that he should ever be so hardened as to commit such crimes?

Habit renders all things easy—even the most atrocious crimes. And habits of vice, like other habits, begin with acts, many of them little ones. The most alarming view of sin therefore, and that which should excite the greatest dread caution and vigilance—is its progressive nature.

I have somewhere read of one who lived in the early ages of the Christian era, who, on being asked by a friend to accompany him to the amphitheater—to witness the gladiatorial combats with wild beasts, expressed his abhorrence of the sport, and refused to witness a scene condemned alike by humanity and Christianity. Overcome at length by the continued and pressing solicitation of his friend, whom he did not wish to disappoint, he consented to go; but determined that he would close his eyes as soon as he had taken his seat, and keep them closed during the whole time he was in the amphitheater. At some particular display of strength and skill by one of the combatants, a loud shout of applause was raised by the spectators, when the Christian almost involuntarily opened his eyes—being once open, he found it difficult to close them again; he became interested in the fate of the gladiator who was then engaged with a lion. He returned home professing to dislike, as his principles required him to do, these cruel games; but his imagination ever and anon reverted to the scenes he had unintentionally witnessed. He was again solicited by his friend to see the sport. He found less difficulty now than before in consenting. He went, sat with his eyes open, and enjoyed the spectacle; again and again he took his seat with the pagan crowd; until at length he became a constant attendant at the amphitheater, abandoned his Christian profession, relapsed into idolatry, and left a fatal proof of the deceitfulness of sin. Thousands of facts to the same signification might be collected, if it were necessary, tending to illustrate **the insidious manner in which the transgressor is led on—in his gradual descent into the gulf of ruin!**

Let us gather up the substance of the preceding chapters, and trace the wanderer through his sinful course. Perhaps before he left his father's house he was not only strictly moral—but was the subject of pious impressions; convinced of sin, and an inquirer after salvation. He heard sermons

with interest, kept holy the sabbath, and made conscience of secret prayer and reading the Scriptures. His conduct had awakened the hopes of his parents, and raised the expectations of his minister; but he was not decided; there had been no actual surrender of his heart to God, through faith, repentance and the new birth. In this state of mind, he left home. Instead of taking alarm, as he should have done, at the dangers to which he was now about to be exposed, he went thoughtlessly to his new situation, and encountered its perils without due preparation. In his place he found little to encourage, perhaps something, or even much—to dampen and discourage serious reflection. The preacher whose ministrations he attended was less impressive and exciting than the one he had left. The employer whom he served took little care of his spiritual welfare. Amid these circumstances, his religious impressions were soon lost, and his concern speedily subsided. Still he could not at once give up the forms of devotion, and for awhile kept up the practice of private prayer; but having no separate room, he soon became ashamed to be seen falling upon his knees in the presence of mirthful or thoughtless companions, who slept in the same room, and who perhaps sneered at the practice.

This is a temptation to which many are exposed, and it is one of the most successful in inducing young people to give up the habit of prayer. He could not, however, quite relinquish a practice to which he had been accustomed from childhood, and occasionally he stole away to his room, and spent a few moments in devotion. This too in time was given up, and prayer wholly discontinued. A great restraint was now removed, and a barrier thrown down. The fear of God, even that small portion of it he seemed to possess, was leaving his heart. He now lives without prayer, and stands exposed to the ten thousand snares and temptations of the world—without a single defense! Yet he fills up his place in the house of God; for he cannot throw off a certain kind of reverence for the sabbath, and a still lingering attachment to the church.

In the same house in which he lives are to be found one, or it may be several, who have no taste for sacred things—but are worldly and sensual. He hears their scoffs at piety, which at first shock him, and he rebukes them, or expostulates

with them, for he is not yet used to profanity—he goes further, and points out the impropriety of their conduct in other things, and warns them of the consequences. By degrees, however, he becomes more tolerant of their sins, and less offended by their wickedness. They rally him, ridicule him, and flatter him by turns, and on some fine sabbath evening persuade him to accompany them in a ramble into the country. After a little hesitation, he consents, enjoys himself and is merry, though not altogether without his conscience smiting him. In a week or two the Sunday party is again formed, and the authority of God again resisted and despised. He now thinks once a day quite enough for public worship, that the morning being given to God, the evening may be given to pleasure, especially by one who is all the week shut up in a close town, and who has no opportunity except on a Sunday—to see the country or breathe fresh air. The same argument, once admitted to be valid, is soon applied to the morning service, and the whole Sabbath is at length given by him to recreation.

Conscience, however, has not allowed him to go thus far without frequent stings and warnings. A letter from home occasionally disturbs him. His father has been informed of his altered conduct, and, in grief of heart, expostulates, entreats, and warns. First he is sorrowful, then he is angry, then inwardly uneasy; but the jest of a sinful companion scatters every better thought, and he is determined to go on in his downward course. He is now the constant associate of evil doers, who have gained an ascendancy over him, and are leading him further and further astray. To calm the apprehensions of his parents, and to silence the remonstrances from home, he writes a penitential letter, and gives promises of amendment. Lying and hypocrisy are now added to his sins, and they are dreadful auxiliaries in benumbing the conscience and hardening the heart.

A celebrated actor comes to the town, or is to appear at one of the theaters, and he is solicited to go to the performance; he is now prepared for this, and readily assents. Everything fascinates him. His senses, imagination, heart, taste, are all carried away captive. His mind is in a state of mental intoxication. He acquires a passion for the stage, and as often as his means and opportunity will allow, he is at the

theater. News of his declension again reaches home, and again his shocked and heart-stricken parents write, and entreat him to alter his conduct, or return to them—but he can now treat a father's advice with contempt, and a mother's tears with cruel indifference. The theater, as we have already shown, is the resort of those unhappy women, of whom the wise man says, "their house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." He is caught in the snare and ruined! He is horror-struck when reflection comes, and in an agony of expiring virtue, exclaims, "What have I done!" Conscience is not quite dead, nor shame quite extinguished. To still the remonstrances of the troublesome monitor within, he revisits the scene where so many are assembled like himself—to drown their sorrows, or to blunt remorse. The death of a friend or relative occurs, which renders it necessary that he should attend a funeral, perhaps hear a funeral sermon. The Book of God, and God's faithful servant, now proclaim the sinfulness of sin and the sinner's everlasting doom. He trembles—but repents not. Scripture now haunts him like a specter, and disturbs him in his course. If he persist in sinning, he must get rid of this troublesome interference. Is the Bible true? One of his companions is a skeptic, and now labors for his conversion to infidelity. Byron's poetry prepares the way for Hume's subtleties, Paine's ribaldry, or Owen's absurdities. Christianity is now called a fable; man's accountability, a mere dogma of cunning priests; and hell, only the picture of gloomy superstition—to hold the mind of man in bondage. He throws off the yoke of true religion; exults in his liberty; yields his body to lusts; adds iniquity unto iniquity, and runs to every excess of riot.

But whence come the funds to support his lusts? His father cannot supply them, nor can his wages; but secret pilfering can, and does. If he can escape detection, what has he to fear? "Man is the creature of circumstances," and his circumstances compel him to rob his employer; and as to an hereafter, it is all a dream. Gambling is now added to his other crimes. Shame is lost, no, he glories in his shame; and commences the trade of ruining others; corrupting the principles of his associates, and the morals of young women. With a character composed of every darkest shade of human depravity, let his closing scene be narrated in the next

chapter, which, by a melancholy fact, confirms the representation here given. Not that I mean to assert that all who go astray in youth reach this dreadful climax—but many do, and all are in danger of it.

What, then, are the **MAXIMS** arising out of this representation, which every young man should always bear in mind?

1. That sin is the most deceitful thing in the universe, as manifested by the insidious manner in which it leads on the transgressor in its deceptive and destructive way; and the excuses with which at every stage of his progress it furnishes him.

2. Those who would not be found walking in the path of sin, should not take the first step in it. Avoid first sins—they always, or nearly so, lead on to others. It is far easier to abstain from the first sin than the second. No temptation of Satan has been more successful than the suggestion, "only this once." That once may be your ruin forever. Acts may be repeated, and come to habits. No sin comes alone—but stands in close connection with others which they teach us to commit, and often afford us an opportunity to commit.

3. Carefully avoid little sins, for they usually lead on to greater ones. No sin abstractly is little—but comparatively some sins are greater than others. It is by inducing you to commit these, that Satan will prepare you for and lead you on to practices of greater enormity. When under the influence of temptation, though it be to a seemingly trivial fault, always ask the question, "What will this sin grow to?"

4. Be very watchful against common and 'acceptable' sins. It is amazing to think what boldness sinners often derive from this circumstance, and how hard it is to persuade them of **the danger of common, and generally practiced sins.** Even good men are sometimes carried away by prevailing and epidemic sins. How frequent is the remark, "If this be sin, I am not singular in the commission of it; there are many others guilty as well as I!" Common

sins lead to uncommon ones. If we follow others in what is evil in little things, we are preparing ourselves to follow evil examples in greater matters.

5. Take care not to be misled by 'names'. Look at things as they are, and do not consider them merely by the terms employed to express them. "Woe to them," said the prophet, "who call evil good—and good evil!" This is often done—vice is called virtue, and virtue vice. Thus gluttony and intoxication are often called, and unhappily deemed by many—being social and being good company. Levity, folly, and even obscenity are called—youthful spirit, boyish cheerfulness, innocent liberty, and good humor. Pride, malice, and revenge are called—honor, courage, and dignity of mind. Vain pomp, luxury, and extravagance, are styled—taste, elegance, and refinement.

Under such disguises does sin often conceal itself, and by such means does it entrap the unwary, and conciliate their admiration. Do not then be cheated out of virtue by the change of names; lift up the disguise, and ascertain the real natures of things.

This deceit also discovers itself by its counterpart in disparaging true piety and goodness by the most deplorable titles. Tenderness of conscience is called—ridiculous precision, narrowness of mind, and superstitious fear. Zeal against sin is called moroseness, or sullen nature. Seriousness of mind is called repulsive melancholy. Sanctity is called disgusting hypocrisy. Now, as nothing tends more to discredit goodness than to give it a bad name, and as not a few are led more by names than the things themselves—I cannot give you a more important piece of advice, than to admonish you to be upon your guard against this deception—of covering sin with the garb of virtue—and branding virtue with the name of sin.

6. Study well the peculiar temptations of the new situation into which you are introduced, and anticipate, so far as it can be done, by what snare you are likely to be tempted and led astray. Look around, and survey your circumstances, that, ascertaining as far as possible by what door temptation will approach, you may be the better

prepared to meet it. Remember, it is of great consequence to your future conduct and character, how you act immediately on arriving at your new situation. I repeat with emphasis—the first steps in the path of goodness or of sin, are frequently taken very soon after a young man leaves home!

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The Young Man Leaving Home

by John Angell James, 1844

DANGERS OF A MINOR KIND

Besides the formidable and appalling perils which have been already enumerated, as awaiting the young man on his leaving the house of his father, and entering on the business of life, there are others, which, if they do not expose him to the same moral jeopardy, are of sufficient consequence to his well-being to deserve attention. Character may be injured by many things which can scarcely be called immoralities. And misery, yes vice also, may grow out of **indiscretions** and **imprudences**.

I. Absence from home may beget forgetfulness of home, and indifference to it—and such a state of mind, where there is much at home worthy to be remembered and loved, is not only unamiable in itself—but injurious to its possessor. Home is not only the scene of enjoyment to the youthful mind—but it is the soil in which the seeds of the social charities and virtues are first sown and grow; so that the child who, with much reason for loving his father's house, is destitute of this affection while there, or loses it when he leaves the spot long trodden by his infant and boyish feet, is a most unpromising character.

The young man, who, upon leaving the house that has sheltered him from his birth, cuts the ties which ought to bind him to that dear spot, and casts no longing, lingering look behind; who allows all its lovely images to sink into oblivion amid new and ever-shifting scenes; who can forget father and mother, brothers and sisters, in his society with strangers; and whose heart is never under the influence of an attraction to the circle of all that is related to him on earth, is destitute, at any rate, of social virtue, and is in peril of losing all other principles of morality.

Cherish, then, young man—cherish a fond affection for your parents' house; it may be humble—but it is home to you.

You may be rising higher and higher at every step above the lowly spot on which your cradle was rocked, and may be outstripping in prosperity those with whom you inhabited it—but still let it ever be sacred to you. Let not your parents have to say to each other with tears, when they have waited years for a visit, and months even for a letter, "Our son has forgotten us!" Let them not have to exclaim, in bitterness of spirit, "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is—to have a thankless child!"

Keep up a constant correspondence with home by letters—an additional motive to which you now possess in cheap postage—and let every line be such as shall be music to a father's and a mother's heart. As often as your engagements will allow, gladden them with a visit. Convince them that neither time, distance, nor prosperity, can lead you to forget them. How will it delight them to see that neither new scenes, nor new occupations, nor new relations, can ever alienate your heart from them!

The preservation of a tender love for home and its occupants, has proved in some cases the last tie to virtue, and a last preservation from ruin. When all other kinds of excellence were lost, and every other motive had ceased to influence, this one lingering feeling was left—and filial affection prevented the complete abandonment of the character to the desolation of vice. "What will my poor father and my dear mother say and feel—and, my brothers and my sisters too, who yet love me? and how shall I ever be able to face them again?" By this one question the youth, about to swing off into the turbid stream of vice that was rolling by, held on, until time was given for other and more powerful influences to come, and the love of home saved its possessor from the perdition that seemed to await him.

II. In opposition to this danger, **the love of home has been so strong, so fond, so delicate in some—that they have been really injured by it, through all their future life.** It has promoted, and even produced, such a softness and feebleness of character, as totally unfitted them to struggle with the difficulties of the world, and rendered them good for nothing—but to be nursed in the lap of luxurious ease. Parents have sometimes lent a helping hand to this

mischief, and have cherished in their children a whimpering fretfulness after home, and such a feeling of dependence on its comforts, as has rendered them, through their whole existence, pitiable spectacles of fretful delicacy and helpless imbecility. After what I have said, no one will suspect me of encouraging an indifference to home, when I call upon my youthful readers to be willing to leave it, for the sake of their future welfare. Act the part of a good child, in loving your father's home and its happy circle; and act also the part of a man, in being willing to leave it, for the sake of learning to perform your part well in the affairs of life. Do not cherish such a hankering after home as will make every situation uncomfortable, and inflict wretchedness upon you wherever you are. Let not your parents be made unhappy by letters full of complaint, and tales of lamentation and woe. Rove not from place to place in quest of that which you will never find—a situation abroad that will command all the indulgences of a father's abode. Acquire a manliness of character, a nobleness and firmness of mind, that can endure hardships and make sacrifices.

It is desirable, of course, that your parents should procure a situation for you, or that you should procure one for yourself, where as much comfort may be secured as is usually attainable—for we have no need to court annoyance, discomfort, and privation. But do not be over-fastidious about these matters, nor let your happiness depend upon having your palate, your convenience, and your ease—consulted and gratified even in the minutest particulars.

Do not set out in life the slave of little things. No situation is without some inconveniences. Human life is a journey; all men are travelers; and travelers do not expect the comforts of their own home, when upon the road. Cultivate a hardihood of mind, that shall make you insensible to petty annoyances. Look at great things, aim at great things, and expect great things—then little ones will neither engage, nor amuse, nor distress you.

III. Among the minor perils to which you are exposed on leaving home, is **the liability of acquiring an unsettled, roving, and visionary disposition.** Now and then a boy of

erratic mind and precocious instability is found, who is ever shaping new and strange courses for himself, and laying schemes for adventure and enterprise. These, however, are comparatively rare cases. But the spirit of roaming is not infrequently awakened when a youth leaves home; then "all the world is before him," as he imagines. But, without making Providence his guide, he begins to think of looking further for himself than his judicious friends have done for him. A useful and honorable employment is selected; good situations are procured for acquiring a knowledge of his business, perhaps at much cost and trouble. His friends rejoice in the idea of his comfortable and advantageous disposal. But before long, comes a letter of complaint, which banishes from his father's mind all these ideas of his son's happy position, and fills him with perplexity. Much against the hopes and wishes that his friends had formed, a change takes place, and the youth removes to another situation. Here he stays not—but removes somewhere else. At length he wishes to go abroad, and try his fortune at sea. This is done, and he embarks. One voyage is enough, and he returns home, weary of foreign travel and of the waves, and is now a dead weight upon his father's hands. He is not immoral. He commits no vice. He does not grieve his friends by profligacy. He is not indolent—but his versatile, unsettled, visionary disposition, makes them sick at heart, and convinces them that he will never be a comfort to them, or do anything good for himself. And he never does. Life is worn out by him in trying many things—and succeeding in nothing!

IV. It may not be unnecessary to caution you against a **spirit of insubordination and disrespect towards your employers.** It not infrequently happens, that a young man has his comfort destroyed, and his character injured—by constant collision with his employer. Sometimes the fault is all on one side; the youth has been so petted and spoiled at home, has had his own way so entirely, and been left so much to be his own employer—that the yoke of authority, however light and easy—is felt to be galling and intolerable, and, like an untamed bullock, he resents and resists it—to the annoyance of his employer, and his own injury. Young man, if this has been your case, instantly change, or you are undone. Such a disposition will not only be your misery—but

your ruin. No one can be prepared to become a employer—but by first acting as a servant; and the way to govern is first to obey. Give up your spoiled habits and caprices—and the sooner the better. Call into exercise your judgment and good sense. Give over the contest with your employer—he must be obeyed, and it is as much for your interest as for his, that he should.

But suppose that he is an austere man, a hard master, an unreasonable employer—even in that case carry your patience and submission to the utmost limit of endurance. If there be absolute tyranny and cruelty, or an intolerable severity—make it known to your parents, after having mildly expostulated against it without effect. Do not by impertinence, by obstinacy, or by rebellion, make bad worse. The galled animal which is urged on by a furious driver, and which cannot escape from the reins and collar, avoids much pain by quiet and patient submission—resistance only brings more blows from his unrelenting employer, and causes deeper wounds by the fretting and friction of the harness.

Perhaps in most cases of disagreement, there is a little fault on **both** sides. I know an excellent young man who was apprenticed to a employer in a respectable trade, and of a tolerably good disposition, and who made a profession of true religion. But this employer was a very bad tradesman, and had a wife who was mirthful, worldly, and exceedingly imperious in ordering the young men who were in the house. The youth I speak of saw the fault of his employer, and felt the haughty demeanor of the wife. Instead of submitting with a good grace to many things that were certainly very annoying, he was constantly in strife about little things, that kept him in perpetual wretchedness. Sometimes his aim was really to correct the blunders into which the employer fell, and to avert the consequences of them; but he often did so pertly and disrespectfully, and therefore met with anger and rebuke in return. He complained to his friends, and made them wretched without relieving himself; and had he not been released from his situation, he might possibly have absconded, and been ruined. I have since heard him say that, much as his employer was to blame, and much cause as he had to complain, yet if he had himself possessed a

little more patience and prudence, and less irritability and combativeness—he would have saved himself incalculable wretchedness, and averted much ill-will and opposition. Let this be a warning to you. In a former part of this volume, I have alluded to the discomfort of such a case, as one of the sources of moral danger. I have now dwelt upon it more at length to show that it is sometimes brought on by a spirit of insubordination, and that it may be in great measure avoided by an obedient, conciliatory, and submissive temper.

V. Entanglements in love, and the rash formation of attachments and engagements of this kind, are another snare into which young men away from home are too apt to fall. Besides the love of society, and the desire of companionship, there is a susceptibility—a strange and restless emotion, seated deep in the heart of youth—which pants for an alliance of the soul with some dear selected object—closer than is felt or found in the warmest general friendship. The attraction of the sexes towards each other is one of the instincts planted in our nature by the hand of Him who formed it, and was intended, like every other arrangement of Providence, for benevolent purposes. And when this passion is guided by prudence and sanctified by piety, it becomes a source of felicity, which if it does not remove, at least mitigates the woes of our fallen state. "It must, however, be a reasonable, and not a reckless passion. A check must be given to these emotions, while immature years are passed in the acquisition of knowledge, or in preparation for some useful station in society. The young affections should be restrained until the period arrives, when it will be honorable and safe to unfetter them. For lack of such restraint, many a youth has dashed his earthly hopes, and dragged out a miserable existence."

Marriages formed in youth have often led to dishonorable dissolution of them—or a wretched marriage. The heart grows faster than the judgment, and should not be allowed in this matter to be our first and only guide. A youth not out of his apprenticeship is a poor judge of the fitness of a person as young as himself to be his companion for life; and his mind should be occupied by other things. "It is not to be denied that, when circumstances justify it, a reciprocal

affection between the sexes, founded on virtuous and honorable principles, is one of the purest sources of earthly happiness. It seems as if the Creator, in pronouncing upon the sinning pair the curses which their disobedience so justly merited, left them—in pity for their calamities—this soothing, mitigating blessing."

But early connections, especially if clandestine ones, formed and cherished without the consent or knowledge of parents—have rarely proved happy ones. In some cases the dissolution of them at the imperative command of parental authority, has been followed by an injurious influence over the young man's future destiny, inasmuch as it has made him either reckless or cynical. I have some painful instances of this before my mind's eye at this moment, some of which are of melancholy, almost tragic interest.

VI. Where a youth has been much indulged at home, and not trained to habits of persevering application and patient industry—he is in danger of sinking into INDOLENCE, and then into vice. This tendency is not

always the result of parental neglect—but is occasionally found in youths, who have had the best precepts to guide them, and the most stimulating examples to quicken them. To whatever cause it may be attributed, indolence is an evil of immense magnitude. There may be no actual vice, nothing at present bordering on immorality—but only a disgraceful and shameless inactivity. Nothing rouses the inert and indolent youth. His employer frowns, scolds, threatens, or coaxes, stimulates, and promises—but it is all in vain. Nothing moves him. It is a difficulty to rouse him from his slumber, or draw him from his bed. And when he is up, he may almost as well be in his chamber, for of the little he does—and it is as little as he can make it—he does nothing willingly, and nothing well. It is more trouble to get him to do anything, than it is to do it oneself.

If one single abstract word may express his character, it is "laziness." What a pitiable and almost hopeless spectacle! A young man gifted by Providence, perhaps with a mind susceptible of improvement, and talents for business, which if cultivated would lead to eminence—dozing away the most precious period of existence, wasting his time, burying his

talent and sleeping upon its grave, disappointing the hopes of his parents, tormenting by his incorrigible laziness the heart of his employer, and preparing himself, probably for vice—certainly for misery.

"Indolence throws open the avenues of the soul to temptations, and the great evil spirit, in his malignant march through the earth, seizes upon the occasion, and draws the unwary youth into his toils. 'For Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do.' By indolence the moral principle is weakened, and the impulse of passion is increased.

Indolence is the gateway through which a troop of evil spirits gain admission to the citadel, and compel conscience to surrender to evil desire. Activity in honorable pursuits strengthens moral principle—makes the conscience vigilant—and furnishes a shield of defense impregnable to the assaults of the tempter. Impoverishment has, in some cases, counteracted the causes of indolence; and if there be a spark of youthful fire in the soul, the stimulant of 'necessity' will operate as a spur to vigorous action. Hence it is, that from the low walks of life have risen some of the greatest statesmen, most learned divines, and gifted geniuses in every department of human action. Their poverty has been the spring of their exertions. Though denied in youth the advantages which wealth commands, they have found more than an equivalent in their own unconquerable aspirations. What seemed to be an obstacle became an impulse; and the impediments in their paths to usefulness and reputation, which would have frightened back less noble spirits, only seemed like the interposing Alps in the march of Hannibal—to make their victory more glorious and more complete. Oh that I could reach the ear of every youth in the land, wake up in his soul those generous desires, and urge him to those active exertions, which should be at once his safe-guard from temptation and the pledge of his success." (Considerations for Young Men)

VII. On leaving home and entering on the business of life, or preparing to enter upon it, **young men are apt to form too high an estimate of the importance of wealth, and to make the acquisition of it the supreme, if not the exclusive object of existence.** Ours is emphatically a money-making country. By far the greater part, if not the

whole, of those who read these pages, will be found among the middle classes—young men who leave a father's house, not to seek fame or rank—but wealth. Their feeling is, "I am going out to learn and try to get a fortune—to take my chance in the world's lottery, with the hope of drawing a prize." To this they are directed, perhaps, and stimulated by their parents, who send them forth, virtually, with this admonition—"Go, my son, and get rich."

Perhaps the son has seen no other object of desire or pursuit before the eyes of his parents—has heard no other commended—and has been placed in a situation where the attraction of no other object could be felt. Money, money, money has been held up to him as the highest good of human life—and he goes out eager to obtain its possession. But even without being thus sworn in and consecrated in childhood on the altar of Mammon; and when all that they have seen and heard in the house of their father is opposed to the notion, youth, in general, can with difficulty be persuaded that to learn to get money is not the only object, or the highest end, of their leaving home.

Riches are the bright vision, which, seen in the distant prospect, call forth their aspirations, and make them willing to sacrifice the endearments of their father's house. They have no ideas of greatness, of happiness, of respectability—apart from wealth—which is the standard of everything valuable with them. The hope of being a rich man is the nerve of their industry, the spur to their energies, the reconciling thought that makes them wipe from their brow with joy, the memorial of the curse of earth. And should we cut this nerve of effort, and paralyze these energies? Should we take from the heart this desire and expectation of success? Should we quench the ardor of youth, and make life a dreary wilderness—pathless, objectless, hopeless? No! Money has proper attractions. It is the gift of God. When sought in subordination to a higher end of life, by honest industry, and as a means of modest gratification and of benevolent effort, it is a blessing to its owners and to others. But when it is wealth for its own sake that is set up as the object of existence; when it is loved for itself; when that love is an absolute passion; when it takes such hold of the inner man as to thrust out and cast down every moral

principle, every noble sentiment, every honorable emotion, and every subject which relates to our immortal destiny; then it is a low and sordid passion, a groveling ambition, a contraction of mind, of itself unworthy a rational, much more an immortal being—and in its influence will benumb the conscience, harden the heart, and ruin the soul.

In a case where you cannot have experience of your own to guide you, be willing, young man—to profit by the experience of others. Is there a subject about which the testimony of mankind is more concurrent, or on which they have delivered their testimony more spontaneously and emphatically, than **the insufficiency of wealth to satisfy the soul?** Has not this been proclaimed by the contentment of millions who have had little—and the restlessness and dissatisfaction of thousands who have had much? Does not Solomon, as the foreman of that countless jury which has sat in judgment upon the world's claim, deliver the verdict in those impressive words, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

Not that I mean to say wealth contributes nothing to our felicity, either by lessening the evils, or multiplying the comforts, of life. It does contribute something, and it may be lawfully sought after, for as much as it can yield. My remarks go only to prove that it is not the chief good, and to dissuade the young from considering and treating it as such in the outset of life. It may be useful as one of the golden vessels with which to serve yourselves, your neighbors, or your Lord. But it must not become a golden idol—to be set up and worshiped instead of Jehovah. I do not wish you to become careless or inactive in business, or even indifferent to the increase of your possessions. But what I aim at, is to convince you that wealth is not the supreme end of life, and that it is infinitely less desirable than an inheritance laid up in heaven. If you make wealth the end of life, you may miss it after all, and even in reference to your own selected object, live in vain. While if you succeed and actually become wealthy, you will still miss the end for which God created you—and lavish existence upon an idol, which cannot save you when you most need its help. You may cry to it in your affliction—but it will have no ears to hear. You may call upon it in your dying hour—but it will have no power to commiserate, and to turn the ebbing tide of life.

You may invoke it at the day of judgment—but it shall be only to be a swift witness against you. You may think of it in eternity—but it will only be to feel it to be "the gold which cankers," and the "rust which shall eat your flesh."

Such, then, are some of the minor dangers—if indeed I can with propriety call them so, when they entail such consequences as I have stated. But what I mean is, that they are not so directly and flagrantly immoral in their tendency and effects as those previously enumerated. Look at them, young men! Weigh them with deliberation. And may God, in answer to your earnest prayers, grant you his grace for your protection and preservation!

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The Young Man Leaving Home

by John Angell James, 1844

THE MEANS OF SAFETY

Such means there certainly are, if you will avail yourselves of them. Imminent as is the peril to which you are exposed—defense is at hand—and it will be your own fault if you are not preserved. Thousands have been kept amid the severest temptations. In the beautiful, touching, and instructive history of **Joseph**, as recorded in the book of Genesis—a history which will never cease to be admired as long as taste or piety shall remain in the world—we have a striking instance of moral preservation amid great danger, well worthy your attention. How fierce and seductive was the assault upon his morals! It came from a quarter, and in a form, the most likely to corrupt a youthful mind—yet how promptly, firmly, and successfully was it resisted! True, his virtue subjected him for a while to much suffering, for, defeated in her criminal intentions, his tempter, under the combined influence of disappointment, shame, and remorse—wickedly revenged herself upon the virtue she could not subdue—blasted his reputation by calumny and false accusation, and caused him to be cast into prison.

But God, in his Providence, ever watchful over the reputation and interests of pious men, overruled all for good, and made the prison of this illustrious Israelite the way to his elevation. But for Potiphar's wife, Joseph would never have been prime minister of Egypt; her guilt and its painful effects were rendered subservient to his advancement. **Sooner or later, virtue will bring its own reward.** But what was the means of Joseph's preservation from the snare? True piety. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" was his noble reply. Here was the shield that covered his heart. True, he had a deep sense of the duty he owed to his employer, and on this ground expostulated with the tempter, "But he refused. "My master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is

greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife."
Genesis 39:8-9

This was faithful, just, generous, noble; but there needed something else, something stronger—to resist such a temptation—morality alone would not have done it, and he called in the aid of his piety. "How can I do this great wickedness—and sin against God?" Thus armed with true piety, he fought with the tempter, and came off more than conqueror. Let every young man mark this, and see the power, excellence, and benefit of piety, as a preservative against sin.

Amid the snares to which you will be exposed, you will need something stronger and more trustworthy than those feeble defenses on which some rely—but which in many instances are demolished by the first assault upon mere unaided virtue. You may leave your father's house with fixed resolutions to shun what is evil, and practice what is good; you may suppose that you have no taste for the wicked pleasures of profligate people; you may cherish a tender regard for the feelings of your parents, sufficient, as you think—to preserve you from everything that would grieve their hearts; you may have your eye on future respectability and wealth, and be inspired with an ambition that makes you dread whatever would interfere with these objects of desire; you may be already moral and upright, and thus be led to imagine that you are prepared to repel every attack upon your purity and integrity.

But if destitute of real religion, you may soon be exposed to temptations which will either sweep away all these defenses as with the violence of a flood, or insidiously undermine them with the slow but certain process of a siege. Religion, true religion, young man, is the only defense to be relied upon; morality may—but piety will, protect you. What multitudes of instances could the history of the church of God furnish, of youths passing unconquered through the most corrupting scenes, by the aid of this Divine shield taken from the armory of Scripture—this shield of faith! I might mention names known and loved among the pious, of your own and other countries, who in youth went

unbefriended and unsupported from the country to the metropolis, and who, by the fear of God, were not only preserved from evil—but were raised to wealth, to influence, and usefulness—by the aid of true religion.

There are two or three questions concerning true religion which may with great propriety be asked, and which have, or ought to have, great force in recommending it to all. Whom did it ever impoverish, except by martyrdom? Whom did it ever render miserable? Who has ever, on a death-bed, repented of having lived under its influence? On the contrary, how many millions has it blessed with wealth, with happiness in life, and comfort in death!

But **what is true religion?** Give me your attention while I attempt to answer this question. It is the most momentous inquiry which can engage the intellect of man. Literature, science, politics, commerce, and the arts, are all important in their place and measure; and men give proof that they duly, or rather unduly estimate their importance, by the devoted manner in which they attend to them. To multitudes they are everything. Yet man is an immortal creature, and there is an eternity before him, and what direct relation have these things to immortality? Or what influence do they exert on our everlasting destiny in another world? More—do they make us either virtuous or happy in this world? Is there any necessary connection between any, or all of these things—with human felicity? They call out and employ the noble faculties of the mind; they raise man from savage to civilized society; they refine the taste; they embellish life; they decorate the stage on which the great drama of existence is carried on, and give interest to the performance. But do they reach the seat of man's chief pleasures or pains—the heart? Do they cure its disorders, correct its tastes, mitigate its sorrows, or soften its weightiest cares? Do they comfort man amid the wreck of his fortunes—the disappointment of his hopes—the loss of his friends—the malignity of his enemies—the pains of a sick chamber—the struggles of a dying bed—and the prospect of a coming judgment? No! True religion is that, and that alone, which can do this! And this it can do, and is continually doing.

Disbelieve, then, the calumnies that ignorant men have circulated concerning it, who represent it as degrading our intellect, and destroying our happiness. On the contrary, a little reflection will convince you that it is the most sublime science, the noblest learning, the profoundest wisdom, the most consummate prudence. In its theory, it is called by way of eminence, truth; in its practice, wisdom; its essence, is love; its effect, even here, peace; and its ultimate reward, an immortality of joy. It is sustained by abundant and unanswerable evidence; it has engaged the attention and captivated the minds of men of the profoundest intellect—to speak only of our own country, I mention Bacon, Milton, Newton, Locke, Addison, and Johnson, and I might mention a host of others—and it is now preparing to subdue all nations to the obedience of faith. Is it not a subject, then, which demands and deserves attention?

The question, however, still returns, **What is true religion?** To reply first in NEGATIVES. It is not merely being baptized in any particular church; it is not merely being educated in the profession of any particular creed; it is not merely being accustomed to observe any particular religious forms; it is not merely an attendance at any particular place of public worship; or the preference of any particular set of doctrines, however orthodox and Scriptural. True religion is all this—but it is a great deal more; it includes this—but it goes much further.

True religion consists of **REPENTANCE** towards God. This is frequently enjoined in the New Testament. "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "Godly sorrow works repentance to salvation." From this last passage it clearly appears what repentance means, and that sorrow is but a part of it, yes, only the operative cause of it. The word signifies a change of mind with regard to sin—it is such a view of the evil of sin in general, and of the number and aggravation of our own sins in particular, as leads us to confess them to God, without reserve or excuse—to hate, and to forsake them.

But repentance is not enough—this is but a part of true religion, and is not all that is necessary to salvation; for

without **FAITH**, have whatever we may, it is impossible to please God. God has not left man to perish in his sins. Mercy has visited our world, and brought salvation to man. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish—but have everlasting life." When the jailer, expecting to perish, exclaimed, "What must I do to be saved?" the apostle replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." We are "justified by faith;" we "purify our hearts by faith," "we live by faith." Faith in general means such a belief of the whole of God's holy word, as leads us to observe and obey it. Faith in Christ signifies such a belief in the testimony borne to him in the Scripture, as the Son of God and Savior of the world; as our Mediator between God and man; as our Prophet, Priest, and King; as our atoning sacrifice and justifying righteousness, as leads us to quit all dependence upon our own works for pardon, acceptance with God, and salvation, and to rely exclusively, and with expectation of eternal life, upon his propitiation and intercession.

This is one great part of true religion, and an essential to salvation. Faith is the saving grace; it is not that for which we are saved, as the meritorious cause—but that by which we are saved, as the instrumental means. The first effect of true faith is peace, the second love, the third holiness.

With faith is connected the **NEW BIRTH**—an entire **change of heart, conduct, and character**. This is what our Lord calls, being "born again," being "born of water and the Spirit;" and the inspired evangelist designates it, being "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man—but of God." It is what the apostle calls, "putting off the old man which is corrupt with his deeds, and putting on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him." It is what is meant when he says, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature—old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." It is that entire change of our moral nature, which is effected by the Spirit of God, through the word received by faith; when the corrupt and fallen nature which we inherit from Adam is taken away, and the holy and spiritual nature which we receive from Christ is imparted.

This new birth is such a change of our hearts, that it gives a new direction to our thoughts, feelings, tastes, and pursuits; and this direction is towards God, holiness, and eternity; whereas formerly our whole direction was towards sin and the present world.

Now, the soul loves **God** with a supreme affection, and from this love springs a sincere desire to please him, and an endeavor to serve him with the obedience of affection, even as a son obeys the father whom he loves. Now he fears **sin**, hates it, and strives to avoid it, as that which God hates, and from which Christ died to redeem him. Now he has a tender conscience, and a jealousy over himself, lest he should offend God, and pollute his own soul. He watches and prays, lest he enter into temptation, and sanctification is his delight. Now he keeps holy the sabbath, reads the word of God, rejoices in the preaching of the cross, loves secret prayer, partakes of the supper of the Lord, joins the communion of saints—because these things are means of grace and ordinances of God.

Constrained by the love of Christ, he now seeks to be useful, especially by diffusing that true religion which he has found so beneficial to himself. He gives up all his former sinful amusements—the theater, the card party, the ball, fashionable and trifling visiting—for they do not now suit his taste. His delight is now in God and his service. He is independent of these sinful amusements, and happy without them.

To sum up, TRUE RELIGION is . . .

personal,
experimental,
practical.

It is a thing of the **heart**—and not merely external religious forms.

True religion is a **living** principle in the soul . . .
influencing the *mind*,
alluring the *affections*,
guiding the *will*,

directing and enlightening the *conscience*.

True religion is a **supreme**—not a subordinate matter. It demands and obtains the throne of the soul. It guides the whole character—and requires the whole man and all his conduct to be in subordination.

True religion is not an occasional thing—but **habitual**. It takes up its abode in the heart—and not merely visits it at certain times and at particular seasons.

True religion is not a partial thing—but **universal**. It does not confine itself to certain times, places, and occasions—but forms an integral part of the character—and blends with everything we do.

True religion is **noble** and **lofty**—not an abject, servile, and groveling thing. It communes . . .
with God,
with truth,
with holiness,
with heaven,
with eternity,
with infinity!

True religion is a **happy**—and not a melancholy thing. It gives peace that passes understanding, and joy that is unspeakable, and full of glory.

True religion is a **durable**—and not a transient thing. It . . .
passes with us through *life*,
lies down with us on the pillow of *death*,
rises with us at the *last day*, and
dwells in our souls in *heaven* as the
very element of eternal life!

Such is true religion—the most **sublime** thing in the world—sent down to be our comforter on earth—and our guide to everlasting life through all this gloomy valley!

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The Young Man Leaving Home

by John Angell James, 1844

TRUE RELIGION AS A PRESERVATIVE FROM SIN

You need, young man—to defend you from the perils to which you are exposed—a shield always at hand, and impenetrable to the arrows of your enemies—and you may find it in true religion. It does this by various means. True religion changes the moral nature, producing a dislike and dread of sin, and a love of holiness and virtue. Piety is a spiritual taste; and, like every other taste, it is accompanied with a distaste for the opposites of those things or qualities which are the subjects of its delight.

Sin is that bitter thing which the soul of a true Christian hates; it is the object of his antipathy, and therefore of his dread. He turns from it with aversion and loathing, as that which is offensive and disgusting. It is not merely that he is commanded by authority to abstain from sin—but he is led away from it by the expulsive power of a new attraction. He may have sinful propensities of his carnal nature—but he resists the indulgence of them, for it is sin against God.

Now what can be a more effectual protection from a practice or habit than an actual dislike of it—or distaste for it? Who does that which he dislikes to do, except under compulsion? When you have once tasted the sweetness of true religion—how insipid, how nauseous, will be those draughts of wicked pleasure with which the sinner intoxicates and poisons his soul! When you have acquired a relish for the pure, calm, satisfying joys of faith and holiness, how entirely will you disrelish the polluting, boisterous, and unsatisfying pleasures of sin! When you have once drunk of the waters of the river of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb, how loathsome will be the filthy turbid streams of licentious gratification!

The new nature, by its own **powerful and holy instinct**, will turn away your feet from every forbidden place, and every unhallowed scene. Panting after God, and thirsting for the living God, taking pleasure in his ways, and delighting in the communion of the saints, you will shudder at the idea of being found in the haunts of vice, or in the society of the wicked. It will be unnecessary to forbid your going to the tavern, the theater, the house of ill fame, the gambling-table, or horse-race; your own renewed and sanctified

nature will be a law against these things, and compel the exclamation, "I will not sit with vain people, nor go in with dissemblers; I have hated the congregation of evil-doers, and will not sit with the wicked. Gather not my soul with sinners."

In addition to this, true religion will implant in your hearts **a regard to the authority and presence of God**. "By the fear of the Lord," Says Solomon, "men depart from evil." This veneration for God comes in to aid the exercise of love for holiness. By the fear of God, I do not mean a slavish and tormenting dread of the Divine Being, which haunts the mind like an ever-present spectre—that is superstition, not true religion. But I mean a fear springing out of affection, the fear of a child dreading to offend the father whom he loves. What a restraint from sin is there in that child's mind! He may be absent from his father; but love keeps him from doing what his father disapproves. So it is with true religion; it is love to God, and love originates fear. He who is thus blessed with the love and fear of God is armed as with a shield of triple brass, against sin. The temptation comes with all its seductive force—but it is repelled with the indignant question—"How shall I do this wickedness, and sin against God?"

And this awesome Being is felt to be everywhere! "O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my every thought when far away. You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest. Every moment you know where I am. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. You both precede and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to know! I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the place of the dead, you are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me. I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night—but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are both alike to you. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. How precious are your thoughts about me, O God! They are innumerable!"

Yes, God is in every place. Heaven and the earth are full of his presence. A person once dreamed that the sky was one vast eye of God, ever looking down upon him. He could never get out of the sight of this tremendous eye,

he could never look up but this dreadful eye was gazing upon him. The moral of this fearful dream is a fact. God's eye is always, and everywhere, upon us. Who could sin, if he saw God in a bodily form looking upon him? Young man, could you go to the theater, or to still worse places, if you saw this vast and searching eye, with piercing looks, fixed upon you? Impossible! "No," you would say, "I must wait until that eye is gone, or closed, or averted." But it is never gone, never closed, never averted. This the pious man knows, and therefore says, "O God, you see me!" Would you sin, if your father were present? Would you enter the haunt of vice if he stood at the door, looking in your face, and saying, "My son, if sinners entice you, consent not; my son, do not walk in the way with them—turn your foot from their path?" You could not so insult and grieve your good father's heart. But though your earthly father is not there, your heavenly Father is. Your father's eye does not see you—but God's eye does! This the pious person believes and feels, and turns away from sin.

True religion also presents a **judgment to come**. Yes, "God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world by Jesus Christ." "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether it be good or bad." "And I saw a great white throne, and I saw the one who was sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to the things written in the books, according to what they had done. The sea gave up the dead in it, and death and the grave gave up the dead in them. They were all judged according to their deeds. And death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death—the lake of fire. And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire!"

What a description! What a day will be the judgment-day! The voice of the descending Judge; the cry of the archangel, and the trumpet of God; the bursting tombs, and rising dead; the conflagration of the universe, and the gathering of the nations to the Lord in the air; the separation of the righteous from the wicked; and the final doom of all; the closing of time, and the commencing of eternity; the going away of the wicked into everlasting punishment, and of the righteous into life eternal! Oh, what destinies! The pious man believes all this, and acts under its influence. How many has the prospect of a day of judgment alarmed in the midst of their sins; how many has it checked; how many has it been the means of converting!

I knew a lady in high life, one of the most accomplished women I ever met

with, who, while living in all the gaieties of fashionable life, visiting in noble families, and fascinating them by her power to please, dreamed that the day of judgment was arrived. She saw the Judge, in dreadful majesty, commence the dread assize. Around him, in a circle, the diameter of which no eye could measure, were drawn the human race, awaiting their doom. With slow and solemn pace, he traversed the whole circle; whomsoever he approved—to them he gave the token of his acceptance by graciously laying his hand upon their heads. Many he passed, and gave them no sign. As he approached the dreamer, her anxiety to know whether she would receive the token of his acceptance became intense, until as he drew still nearer, and was about to stop before her, the agony of her mind awoke her. It was but a dream—a blessed one, however, for her. It produced, through the Divine blessing, a deep solicitude for the salvation of her soul. She became an eminent and devoted Christian; and some years since departed—to receive from Christ the gracious token of his approval, in his immediate presence, and in the regions of immortality!

You, too, young man, must be brought into judgment. You are to form a part of the circle drawn round Christ—to receive your sentence—he will approach you; he will give you the token of reception or rejection. Do, do consider that tremendous scene! How dreadful was the irony of Solomon! "Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. Follow the ways of your heart and whatever your eyes see—but know that for all these things God will bring you to judgment!" You *may* go to places of wicked amusements—but you *must* go from thence to the judgment-seat of Christ! There is a path from every scene of sin—to the judgment of God. He goes with you as a witness; and conscience also goes with you as a witness—what witnesses these to be brought against you in judgment! "I will come near to you to judgment—and I will be a swift witness against all who do not fear not me, says the Lord."

Oh, did you realize this dreadful fact—did you keep your eye upon the judgment-seat—did you anticipate your appearance at the bar of Christ, which pious men do, and which true religion would lead you to do, if you possessed it—how effectually would you be protected from the evils by which you are surrounded! Could you sin, with a voice sounding in your ears, "For all these things I will bring you into judgment?" No! This would be a defense to you, as it has been to many others, and is to many now. Adopt it as yours!

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The Young Man Leaving Home

by John Angell James, 1844

TRUE RELIGION, THE SOURCE OF COMFORT AND HAPPINESS

"Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." 2 Timothy
3:4

"Young men away from home must have something!" you are ready to say, "to interest—to amuse—to gratify them! They have been called to sacrifice the comforts of their father's house, and to endure many hardships and much discomfort—and need something to enliven and divert their minds!" True. But it should be of a kind that will not endanger their health, their morals, or their future interests—and especially their souls. To seek relief from the labors of business, the gloom of solitude, or the annoyance of an unpleasant home—by "the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season"—is to recruit our wearied nature, and to enliven our dull frame, by drinking a sweet-tasting and effervescing draught of deadly poison! That young man is not only not truly pious—but scarcely acts the part of a rational creature, whose love of diversion leads him to seek such gratifications as are ruinous to all his interests for time and eternity! **A love of pleasure, a taste for amusement, as such—is a most dangerous propensity!**

Business, young man, business is what you should attend to. There is pleasure in industry. Employment is gratification. But still you repeat, "We must have something which shall interest the mind when business is over; which shall be a subject of diversion and mental occupation—to fill up the gaps of thought during the day, and which shall be an object to which the eye may constantly turn for refreshment and relief amid all that is disgusting and disheartening in the rough cares of our situation." Well, here it is! Here is a glorious object! Here is what you need—just what you need—and all you need! True religion, true religion, my reader, will prove to be, if you try it, an engaging

companion, a sympathizing comforter, an ever-present friend, and a sure guide to the fountain of happiness!

Do not listen to the ignorant testimony of those who have never tried it, and who represent it as the enemy of human delight; but attend to the intelligent witness of those who speak from experience, and who declare it to be the very element of happiness. Who would take the evidence of a blind man about color and form; or of a deaf one about sounds; or of one without the sense of taste about flavor? And equally irrational would it be to take the opinion of an ungodly man about true religion!

It is a truth, which the experience of millions has proved, that "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Consider what true religion is—not mere bodily exercise, a drudgery of forms and ceremonies. No! But an occupation of the mind and heart! An occupation, too, which engages the noblest contemplation of the mind, and exercises the purest affections of the heart. It is the employment of the whole soul upon the most sublime object that mind can be conversant with.

Mental occupation is essential to felicity, and here it is in perfection and permanence. Dwell upon the privileges of true religion; the pardon of sin; full and free justification; the favor of the eternal God, together with the consciousness of that favor, and communion with Him; peace of conscience, like the sunshine on the heart; the renovation of our corrupt nature; and the subjection of passion, appetite, and animal propensity—to rules which Scripture prescribes, and reason approves—and all this united with the hope, prospect, and foretaste of eternal glory! I ask, can the man whose mind is in this state be otherwise than happy? I wish to impress you with the idea that the individual who is thus religious, whose piety is Scriptural, evangelical, experimental—and not superstitious, nominal, and ignorant—must be happy; not, indeed, perfectly so, for perfect happiness is known only in the heavenly world. But he is contented and satisfied, as being in a state of repose.

His mind is not anxiously and ignorantly urging the question,

"Who will show us any good?" He has a definite idea of what will make him happy; he is not in quest of something to occupy his mind and satisfy his heart—but has found it, and is at rest! He has become possessed of **a supreme object of interest**, which his heart loves, and his conscience approves, an object which has many and great advantages; it is always at hand, for it is *with* him, yes, *in* him! He proves the truth of the assertion, "The good man shall be satisfied from himself;" because **the spring of his happiness is in his own bosom!** He is calm and tranquil. His pleasures are not only pure—but peaceful. His pleasures occasion no agitation, no painful reflection, no remorse. His pleasures are inexpensive. They do not unfit him for business, nor create in him a disgust with his trade or profession—but brace and invigorate him to carry on its labors, and endure its cares. His pleasures do not impair his health or enervate his mind—but are all of a healthful nature, both as regards the body and the soul.

True religion, moreover, includes **duties** that are all agreeable. The love of God, the service of Christ, the practice of holiness, the destruction of sin, the cultivation of charity, all are pleasant. The Christian, in going the house of God, enjoys far more delight than he does who treks about on Sunday excursions. The reading of the **Bible**, although it does not fascinate the imagination, and kindle the passions, like a novel or licentious poem—soothes, softens, and sanctifies the heart. **Prayer** is one of the most elevating exercises in which the soul can be engaged, for it is man speaking to God—the poor frail, finite child of dust and ashes, admitted, through the mediation of Christ—to an audience with the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God. And as to the pleasures of friendship, where are they enjoyed in such perfection as in the communion of saints?

Nor is this all—for true religion supplies an inexhaustible source of the deepest interest—in the various great and glorious institutions which are formed and in operation to promote the moral, spiritual, and eternal welfare of mankind; to many of these, young men are contributing, in different ways, their valuable assistance. I can with confidence ask, whether the polluted and polluting scenes of

earthly pleasures—to which many resort, can yield half the satisfaction which is enjoyed at public meetings of pious institutions, where interesting facts unite to captivate the imagination and delight the heart. There is more real enjoyment here, than in any of those sinful diversions in which men of corrupt taste find their amusement. The great enterprises for the conversion of the world, now carrying on its operations through all lands, supplies an object of unrivaled sublimity, splendor, and importance, and which, by firing the ambition, and employing the energies of youthful piety, never fails to be productive of pure delight, as often as the eye contemplates it, or the mind is conscious of promoting it.

Blessed with true piety, a youth may be happy anywhere and everywhere. The apprentice, serving the most tyrannical employer, or oppressed by the most unfeeling and hard-hearted boss, will still find, if he possesses true religion, a relief sufficient to lighten the yoke and soften the rigors of the hard service. And how it will cheer the solitude of the clerk or the shopman in his private lodgings, when neither friend nor companion is near! There he can commune with his God, and pray to his heavenly Father, though his earthly one be far from him. He is not now tempted to leave his cheerless dwelling in quest of comfort, for he can find enough in pious exercises—or if he wishes, as he lawfully may do—to relieve his solitude, he can be happy in hearing a sermon, or going to the meeting of some Christian committee with which he is connected, or to the public meeting of some society which may be held in the neighborhood.

Solitude itself is not disagreeable, for he wishes to cultivate his mind by knowledge, and his heart by piety; and when exchanged for social communion and pleasures, they are of a kind to do him not harm—but good. True religion thus makes him comfortable whether alone—or in society.

Young man, I want you to be happy, and I am sure there is only one thing that will make you so—and that is true piety. You may be amused and gratified, pleased and diverted, at least for a while, without this; but amusement and diversion are only 'substitutes' for happiness—not the thing itself. Man

was made for the service and enjoyment of God—and he cannot be truly happy until he is brought to answer the end of his creation.

Who can tell what sorrow awaits him in future life? Oh, could I lift up the 'veil of futurity', and disclose the scenes of your history, how would your heart sink to foresee the trials that are in reserve for you! Setting out upon the voyage of life, with a bright sky, a smooth sea, a fair wind, and every sail filled with the favorable breeze, you may soon have to encounter the storm that will reduce you to a wreck on some lonely and dreary shore. Your trade may fail, your wife may die, and your constitution may sink under the pressure of accumulated woes. **What is there to comfort and support you amid solitude, and the long, dark, wintry night of adversity?** True religion, had you sought it in the season of youth and health, would have helped you to sustain the shock of misfortune by its consoling and strengthening influence! But you have neglected it, and in its absence, there is nothing human or Divine to support you, and you fall, first into poverty, then to drinking, then to the grave, and then to the bottomless pit!

How many who have died of a broken heart, or as slaves to drunkenness, and have gone from the sorrows of time to the torments of eternity, would, if they had possessed true religion, notwithstanding their misfortunes, have lived in peace, died in hope, and been blessed forever! True religion, **if** it led only to misery upon earth, if it were really the gloomy and pleasure-destroying thing which many represent it, and others believe it to be—yet, as it leads from everlasting misery to eternal bliss hereafter, would be our highest as well as our incumbent duty! For who would not escape from hell and flee to heaven, if it could only be done by passing through dark or gloomy places, or a perpetual martyrdom?

But instead of this, true piety is the most serene and delightful thing on earth! It is the sweetener of our comforts—the softener of our cares—the solace of our sorrows! It deprives us of no enjoyment but what would injure us—and gives other and far better ones in place of those it takes! It is the spring flower of youth—the summer

sun of our manhood—the autumn fruits of our declining years—and the lunar brightness of the wintry night of our old age! It is a verdant, quiet, secluded path to the paradise of God! And, after giving us the light of his countenance in life, the support of his grace in death, will conduct us to his presence, where there is fullness of joy, and to his right hand, where there are pleasures forevermore!

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The Young Man Leaving Home

by John Angell James, 1844

TRUE RELIGION A MEANS OF PROMOTING THE TEMPORAL INTEREST OF ITS POSSESSOR

Did you ever consider the wise King's praise of Wisdom, and the beautiful personifications in which he conveys it? "Happy is the person who finds wisdom and gains understanding. For the profit of wisdom is better than silver, and her wages are better than gold. Wisdom is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. She offers you life in her right hand, and **riches and honor in her left hand**. She will guide you down delightful paths; all her ways are satisfying. Wisdom is a tree of life to those who embrace her; happy are those who hold her tightly." Proverbs 3:13-18

This is one of the sparkling gems of composition which decorate and enliven the pages of Scripture. Go, young man—to this beautiful personification, this angel form—she has length of days in her right hand. True religion will not necessarily insure health and avert disease—but it **will** prevent the body and mind from being destroyed or impaired by vice. Read the description which is given of the consequences of sin in the book of Job, as exhibited in an aged, worn-out sinner—"His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust." And then add the language of Solomon, where he says, "at the end of life you will groan in anguish when disease consumes your body, and you will say—How I hated discipline! If only I had not demanded my own way! Oh, why didn't I listen to my teachers? Why didn't I pay attention to those who gave me instruction? I have come to the brink of utter ruin, and now I must face public disgrace." Proverbs 5:11-14

Slaves of lust! Victims of drunkenness! You loathsome spectacles, you living corpses, full of everything that is

tormenting to yourselves and disgusting to others—rise like specters before the imagination of young men—to deter them from the crimes which have reduced you to corruption—even on this side of the grave! True religion would have guarded you from all this! Such men live out not half their days.

But see what is in the 'left hand' of wisdom—"riches and honor." Not that true religion shields from poverty, and guides all her subjects to wealth—but still it prevents the crimes which lead to poverty—and implants the virtues which tend to the wealth. **SIN is an expensive thing**, as I have already remarked—it is a constant drain upon the pocket, and keeps a man poor, or makes him dishonest. While true **piety** is frugal, industrious, sober, and prudent—it makes a man trustworthy and procures for him esteem, preference, and position. Do you wish to prosper, and get on in the world? (and it is quite lawful for you to wish it, you ought, indeed—to wish it,) go to wisdom, and take the blessing—even riches and honor, which she has in her left hand, and which she holds out to you. Go and pluck the fruit of this tree of life, or catch the precious produce as the boughs are shaken by the favoring gales of Providence!

How many young men have left their native village, and their father's house, with all the property they had on earth tied up in the bundle they carried in their hand, and have gone to London poor and almost friendless lads, who yet, because they became the disciples and admirers of godly wisdom, have risen to wealth and respectability! What names could I record, dear to the church of God, and known to the 'friends of man' throughout the country and the world, who, by the aid of true religion, rose from obscurity to renown—and from poverty to wealth! Their history is a striking proof that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

I could mention, were it proper, the name of one, who went into an large business in London as a boy to sweep the shop and carry out goods—who became, at length, possessor of the whole business, died rich, and his property, in part, became the foundation of a new charitable institution. I

could mention another man, who, from a poor lad, became a leading man in one of our religious denominations, and the funder of one of our most useful Christian societies. I could mention a third man, who, from being a shop-boy in the city, became the possessor of a large fortune, which at his decease enriched many of the noblest institutions of the present time.

In these cases, true religion, by rendering them steady, industrious, and responsible—was the means of their wealth and elevation. They shunned evil companions, evil places, evil habits, evil amusements—and, under the influence of piety, entered those paths which lead many from poverty to wealth, and from obscurity to renown. They sat down as young men at the feet of wisdom—learned her lessons—and received her rewards!

I do not mean to say that true religion—without application to business, or talents for it, will succeed. But true religion, by giving diligence and sharpening the faculties—will promote success. Piety exerts a favorable influence, not only on the morals—but on the 'secular habits of life'—and one piece of advice which wisdom delivers, as she holds out her left hand blessings, is, "Be diligent in business—as well as fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." It is a lawful and proper ambition to try to excel in the profession or business to which you have devoted your life. You ought not to be satisfied with dull mediocrity—much less with creeping, groveling inferiority. You happily live in a country where the summits of society are accessible to those who seem, by the circumstances of their birth—to be placed at the bottom. But it is only talent—united with good conduct—that can expect to rise. While incompetence, which is more frequently the result of a lack of industry, than of ability and indolence, will sink. Piety and a desire to excel in business are helpful to each other. Piety will give the virtues necessary to the latter—while the latter will guard the former from being destroyed by many of those evils to which youth are exposed—and by which they are hindered from getting on in life.

The cultivation of the mind in all useful knowledge is also auxiliary to elevation in life. A 'religious dolt' may rise in

business—but it is not usual. Besides, admitting that true religion does sometimes help ignorance up the steep ascent to wealth, it is knowledge alone that can fit a man for eminent usefulness. Employ your spare time in reading, and acquiring knowledge. Ignorance was never so inexcusable as it is now, when the fountains of science are opened all around us, and the streams of learning are flowing even into the cottages of the poor. True religion and knowledge agree well together, and are reciprocally helpful. Let your reading be select and useful. **Do not squander the little time you have to spare, upon trash!**

How well is that young man defended from the dangers that surround him, and how likely to rise in life, who has true religion to sanctify his heart, application to business to occupy his time, and a taste for reading to employ his leisure! It is he who receives from wisdom the blessings she holds forth in both of her hands—length of days in the right hand—and riches and honor in the left hand—and at the same time it is his to gather from the tree of life the fruit of glory and immortality!

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The Young Man Leaving Home

by John Angell James, 1844

TRUE RELIGION, A MEANS OF USEFULNESS

To do good is God-like. To do evil is devil-like. And we are all imitating God or Satan—accordingly as we are leading a holy or a sinful life. It is said in Scripture, that "one sinner destroys much good." He not only does not do good himself—but he destroys good in others. Instead of doing good, he does only evil. He not only leaves unassisted all the great means and instruments for improving and blessing the world, and has no share in all that is being done for the spiritual and eternal welfare of mankind; but he opposes it, and seeks to perpetuate and extend the reign of sin, and the kingdom of Satan! He corrupts by his principles, seduces by his example, and leads others astray by his persuasions. Who can imagine, I again say, how many miserable specters await his arrival in hell—or follow him there to be his tormentors—in revenge for his having been their tempter! He is ever scattering the seeds of poison and death in his path!

True religion happily saves all who possess it from this mischief—it makes a man an instrument of good, and not of evil—to his fellow creatures. True religion renders him a blessing—and not a curse; a savior—and not a destroyer; a physician to heal—and not a murderer to destroy! He lives to do good—good of the noblest and most lasting kind—good to the soul—good to distant nations—good to the world—good to unborn generations—good for eternity! He is a benefactor to his race—a philanthropist of the noblest order. By a godly example, he adorns true religion, and recommends it to others, who, attracted by the beauties of holiness as they are reflected from his character—are led to imitate his conduct.

He connects himself, while yet a youth, with a Sunday school, and trains up the minds of his students in the ways

of virtue and true religion. He associates with a Tract Society, and visits the habitations of the poor with these admirable tracts of Bible truth. As his life advances, his property increases, and his influence becomes more powerful—his sphere of usefulness widens—his energies strengthen, and his devotedness becomes more intense. He consecrates a share of his **money** to the funds of Bible, Missionary, and various other societies—and gives his **time**, **wisdom**, and **labor** to these noble organizations. He thus lives not for himself alone—but for the glory of God—the spread of true religion—and the salvation of souls. To do good is his aim—his delight—his business!

He catches the spirit of the times, and is a man of the age, and for the age. In secret he swells the cloud of incense that rises from the church, and which no sooner touches the throne of grace than it descends in showers of blessings upon the world. He doesn't need the intoxicating cup of worldly amusement—as a relief and diversion from the toils of business, and the cares of life—but drinks a purer draught from the fountain of living waters which he is engaged in conveying to those who are sinking into eternal death! He is consulted on every new 'project of mercy', and called on to assist in working it for the relief of human wretchedness. His name is enrolled on the list of public benefactors—and pronounced with respect by all who know him. The blessing of him who was ready to perish, comes upon him, and he has caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. Thus he **lives**.

A happy **death** terminates a holy and useful life. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying—Write this down! Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they are blessed indeed, for they will rest from all their toils and trials; for their good deeds follow them!" He is received into glory by the Lord Jesus, who with a smile bids him welcome, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord!" Transcendent scene! glorious spectacle! His usefulness is seen in living forms of everlasting glory! The good he did on earth follows him to heaven, and is a part of it. He will never cease to reap the rich reward of doing good, as with adoring wonder and rapturous delight he hears his name repeated with grateful praise in the golden streets of the New Jerusalem, by those

whom he was the instrument of conducting to the celestial city!

Young man, have you **ambition**? Can your soul be fired with the name of glory—or the prospect of noble deeds? Have you a pulse that beats to the sound of immortality, that word which has raised and led to action an army of heroic spirits panting for fame? Oh, here, here, behold an object worthy to kindle this ardent flame in the human bosom! Here is the high road to renown—and here alone! All else beside true religion—and that which true religion produces—shall perish! The garlands which are hung around the busts which have been placed in the 'temple of earthly fame' shall perish—for the temple itself shall perish in the great conflagration. But here is immortality. Souls are immortal! True religion is immortal! Salvation is immortal! And so is the **renown** of him "who converts a sinner from the error of his ways, and saves a soul from death!"

This renown is within your reach. It is not an object of only ministerial ambition—nor only within the power of great wealth, or lofty genius, or commanding influence only—but always attainable by real piety—even piety in youth—and piety in humble life. The honor of being useful—the glory of being instrumental in saving souls—is placed within the reach of the youngest, poorest, and most illiterate aspirant after the mighty and truly sublime achievement!

Never, never, my young friend, were there such **opportunities**, or such means of holy usefulness, as there are now—and never were there such **incentives** to it. The world is in movement, and so is the church. The age of inactivity is past, the era of general action is come. The armies of good and evil are marching to the scene of conflict—and mustering in the valley of decision. The gospel trumpet is blowing, and calling the people of God to the battle, which is to rescue the world from the slavery of sin and Satan—and restore it to God. Victory is certain, and the shout of it will one day be heard, ascending to heaven from this regenerated earth. Will you be idle? What! at such a time? Will you have no share in such a triumph?

But this is not all. Will you be in the routed army, and

belong to the conquered foe—which you must be if you are not truly pious? The cause of true religion is but one, and all the pious belong to it, and are identified with it; and the cause of sin is but one, and all the ungodly are identified with it. True religion is destined to victory all over the earth, and **every true Christian does something to accelerate the triumph**, and will share the honor of the glorious conquest!

What, then, is a life of sin, of worldly pleasure, of mirthful wastefulness—compared with a life of true religion! What a contrast in their nature—and oh! what a contrast in their results! The former is the course of a demon—the latter of a ministering angel. And while the former shall eat the fruit of its evil doings forever in the pit of destruction—the latter shall gather its everlasting reward from the tree of life in the paradise of God!

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The Young Man Leaving Home

by John Angell James, 1844

TRUE RELIGION AS A PREPARATION FOR BEING THE HEAD OF A HOUSEHOLD UPON EARTH, AND FOR AN ETERNAL HOME IN HEAVEN

You are preparing, in your present situation—to act the part to which Providence may have destined you upon earth; and it is every way probable, according to the natural course of events, that in a few years you will be found at the head of a household of your own. This opens to you not only an interesting scene—but also an important and very responsible one. From the nature and constitution of society, the destiny of one generation is powerfully affected by the conduct of that which precedes it. The husband influences the wife—the father the child—and the employer the servant.

Consequently, of how much significance is the character of the head of a family! How many households are scenes of discord and wretchedness, and are at length reduced to poverty and ruin—by a drunken, pleasure loving, or idle father! How many who enter life with the fairest prospects of comfort and success, throw all away by sin! They draw some lovely and virtuous young woman into the companionship of life with them, see a family rising around—and are bound by every tie of justice and honor to provide for the comfort of their wife, and the prosperity of their children. But they had acquired habits of **indolence** or **extravagance** in youth, and all goes wrong—until ruin drives them from that home, which industry and sobriety would have enabled them to maintain. At length the wife dies of a broken heart—and the children become vagrants in the world. True religion would have prevented all this, and preserved that home to be a scene of order, peace, plenty, and respectability!

But even where things do not reach this point, and there is neither vice nor poverty—but morality, and success—still think of a family without true religion, an atheistic household, in which there is no family worship, no instruction, no regard to eternity—a mere temporal society—though followed with eternal consequences! Every father and mother is answerable to God for the souls of their children—and oh! what an account will those who are ungodly have to render to him at the day of judgment! What an eternity will such **parents** have to spend in the bottomless pit—with those **children** whose souls sank there through their guilty neglect!

True religion will fit you to preside with dignity over your household—it will add the sanctity of the Christian to the authority of the parent—and render obedience, on the part of your children—more pleasant and easy, as given to one who has such high claims to it. How will your family prayers tend to keep up, in all other respects, family order! Piety will strengthen and soften every domestic tie, as well as consecrate every domestic occupation. True piety will lighten the cares of business, brighten the scenes of prosperity, and yield consolation in the dark season of family sorrow. If called to leave your wife and family—it will mitigate the pang of separation, by the prospect of eternal union in a world where death has no power. Or if required to surrender a pious wife or children—it will prevent the sting of that sorrow which has no hope. What a bliss then to a family, what a benignant and heavenly inhabitant—is sincere, consistent, eminent piety—as it shines forth in the form and character of a godly father and employer!

And now, young man, let me entreat you to consider what is the true character of your present life—viewed in relation to the life that is to come. Are you now at home—or are you away from home? Let the poet answer. "Strangers into life we come, And dying is but going home!"

This present world is not our HOME—and unhappy is the man who makes it such. Heaven is the home of immortal man. During the whole time we are upon earth, we are away from home; and away from it, that we may prepare, like a child at school, or a youth in his apprenticeship—to go at

length finally and fully to possess and enjoy it. This present world is not your REST. How short and uncertain is your continuance upon earth! You cannot remain many years, you may not remain one; for what is your life but "a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away!" At a moment's notice you may die! A flash of lightning—a heart attack—a ruptured blood vessel—the overturn of a boat or a carriage—may plunge you suddenly into eternity! You are suspended over that vast gulf by 'the brittle thread of human life!' Instead of living to old age—you may not live to be twenty! Instead of living to be an employer—you may die before your apprenticeship is finished. Place your finger on your pulse and say "If this stop—and any second it may stop—I am instantly in heaven or hell!"

Can you call this present world home? Ought you to feel at home here? Should you wish to consider this your home? For what a home is it—but such a one as he had whose dwelling was among the tombs? Home! What! would you desire it to be such, where there is so much to disturb, distress, and annoy? No! God has provided some better thing for us! Heaven, I repeat, is the home of immortal man!

It is to this to which the hope of the pious in every age has aspired; and the prospect of which has cheered them amid all the sorrows of life. "Two more stiles," said the martyr, as he walked across the fields to the place of execution, "and I shall be at home!—at my Father's house!" "I am going home!" is the common and joyful exclamation of many dying Christians. And what a home! The home of saints, of martyrs, of angels, of Christ, of God!

What is the **PREPARATION** for such a home? True religion—nothing but true religion. That home is a **holy** one. Heaven is in fact the home of true religion itself—for this present world is only in a wayfaring pilgrimage state. True religion is a heavenly visitant upon earth, traveling back to her native skies, and will never be at rest until she finds herself in the presence of God, her Divine Parent. Nothing, therefore—but true religion, can prepare a soul for heaven. You may have a good knowledge of the **arts**; you may have a competent, or even profound acquaintance with **learning** and **science**; you may have great public **talents**, which fit

you for action and for influence among your fellow men. But what have these things to do with preparation for heaven? What reference have they to the eternal state?

Nothing but holiness will prepare you for a holy heaven! Would a knowledge of trade, agriculture, or science, prepare anyone, without the knowledge and manners of a courtier—to reside at a royal court? How much less in heaven! No, it is sincere, experimental piety alone, which can prepare you to enter into the presence of God. This 'heavenly character' must be acquired on earth—or it can never be acquired at all. Begin then at once. It is a preparation for eternity—and who can commence such a work too early? You may have but little time allotted for this transcendently momentous affair. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go." Live for eternity—live for heaven—and the only way to do this, is to live by faith.

Once in heaven, you will never leave it! There will be no going out forever!. You will leave your Father's house no more! The celestial family will never break up! Once at home there, you will be at home forever!

But neglect true religion, and you can never be admitted to the regions of blessed immortality. Your parents may be there—but you will be excluded, and shut up in outer darkness forever! I can imagine you in the day of judgment, pressing to lay hold upon the hand of your father—but he turns from you as from an object of disgust, exclaiming, "Your father no longer." You then direct an imploring eye to the mother who bore you, and laying hold on her robe, piteously exclaim, "My mother, do you not know me?" Gathering up her garment of light, she shakes you off, with the dreadful disownment, "I know not the enemies of my Lord." They pass to the right hand of the Judge—while you, by a power you cannot resist, are sent to the left! And what remains? You will present from that day the melancholy spectacle of an outcast from heaven—a homeless immortal—a vagrant in the universe—a wretched wanderer through eternity!

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The Young Man Leaving Home

by John Angell James, 1844

SPECIAL ADDRESSES TO SEVERAL CLASSES OF YOUNG MEN

1. I select as the first whom I particularize, **those who have left or are soon to leave their native country**, whether for a permanent residence abroad, or only for a season. Numerous and very different are the causes which lead to this temporary or permanent departing. In some cases it is a mere curiosity to see the world; in others a restless, dissatisfied, and indolent disposition; in others a still worse cause. While in some it is a step to which they are called by the plans of Providence, and which circumstances render, if not absolutely necessary, yet every way proper. Whatever may lead to it, however—it is always a course of **danger**, and sometimes of **sorrow**. That young man who can step from his native shores into the vessel which is to bear him to a distant part of the earth; who can see the land of his nativity recede from his view, until its spires, hills, and its cliffs are lost amid the mighty waste of its waters; who can utter his adieu to the friends and scenes of his childhood, which he very probably may never revisit; who can undertake the perils of the sea, and the danger of tropical climates, all without some degree of heart sickness, or, at least, evident sadness—must have a heart too cold and too hard to be at present the residence of piety and virtue—and affords little hope for the future. Insensibility under such circumstances proves a callous mind—while sadness and even sorrow are an honor, and not a weakness—to the youth who rather weeps than utters his last adieu.

If it is a sinful cause that takes you to sea—you will have time for reflections upon the voyage. Use it well. As you pace the deck, with the moon and the stars speaking silently to you of God, think of your course, meditate upon your conduct; give conscience permission and time to speak—and listen to its voice. **Imagine you see your godly mother**

on the deck, pointing to heaven, and saying, through her tears, "Repent my son, repent, and come back to us! We wait to receive you to our arms—and to our hearts!" Hear that gentle voice coming to your ears when nothing else is heard but the whistling of the wind, the dashing of the waves, and the creaking of the masts and rigging. Many a youth in those solemn moments has considered his evil ways, and turned from them to God. Cut off from many temptations and his ungodly companions—he has had wisdom given him to be sorry for the course he had run—has resolved to forsake it, and has returned home when the voyage was over—to heal by his good conduct, the wounds which he had inflicted by his wicked behavior, on the hearts of his parents.

But if these scenes are not enough to awaken reflection, and to startle conscience from her slumber, may I hope that **the roar of the tempest** will do it? Then, when the vessel, with her sails torn, and her masts injured, is being driven before the fury of the gale, towards the rocky shore—and the horrors of shipwreck and a grave among the monsters of the deep are before you—then think of your ways, then look back upon your wicked career, and cry to God for mercy through Christ! If you perish at sea—perish praying for pardon through the blood of the Lamb! Or if you survive the storm, let its perils never be forgotten, nor the purposes and good resolutions which in the hour of danger it led you to form. Do not as some unhappy youths do, smile at your fears and remorse—when you find that the vessel has outlived the tempest and you are safe.

It is by no means uncommon for young men of unstable minds, and indolent roving habits, when tired of the restraints of home, and the remonstrances of parental authority—to disregard them all, and enlist into the **ARMY**. It is often a dreadful and desperate change. Some few, and but few instances have occurred, in which it has been followed by reformation, and these youths have either risen in their profession, or returned reclaimed, to their father's house. This book may perhaps be read by some who have thus left the quiet scenes of home and trade—for the wanderings, turbulence, and dangers of a soldier's life. Oh what a contrast must you often draw, perhaps with a sigh or

a tear, between the moral and affectionate inhabitants of the home you have left—and the base licentious companions with whom you are compelled now to associate; between the comforts of your father's house—and the tent or the barracks, where you now lodge; between the kindness and loving treatment of your relatives—and the stern, unsoftened authority of a military officer!

Unhappy youth! to have been reckless of all this, and to have exposed yourself to such annoyance, degradation, and wretchedness! Think of your ways! Look back upon the past with calmness, impartiality, and penitence. It is not yet too late to amend your conduct, and return to civil life. You have now much time for reflection. During those hours of the day which are spent upon some long and tiresome march; or of the night which you pass in solitude, pacing the sentinel's measured ground, when darkness shrouds you, or the storm is rolling its thunders over you, and darting its lightnings around—reflect, oh reflect upon your ways!

Think of the mother at home, whose rest is broken, or whose dreams are troubled at that moment by thoughts of her far-off soldier son. Or, when sailing in the crowded transport with your regiment to some distant, and perhaps unhealthy, colony—dwell upon the cause of your being thereupon the troubled ocean, borne every moment farther and farther from the land of your birth. Or, when the evening order is given to prepare next morning to mount the breach and storm the besieged town, or to take the field of battle against the marshaled foe—let conscience, long asleep—awake and speak! Oh, in that dreadful hour—what voices cry, "Repent, repent!" Then think, how near you may be to death and eternity! When the roll shall be called over to the survivors, no exulting "Here!" may follow the repetition of your name—but a dreadful silence seem to say, "Dead! Slain!" And if not slain, left to groan away a few days or weeks of miserable existence in a crowded hospital—amid the most horrid sights and sounds of mortal woe.

But without the battle or the storm—a soldier's life in tropical climates is fearfully perilous. Spectators have wept as they have seen the 'handful of soldiers' landed on the shores of their native country—and the 'thousand strong'

reduced to the fifty or the hundred gaunt and emaciated invalids. *And where were the rest?* Left amid the sands of the East, or the charnel houses of the West Indies!

Let those who in their petulant resistance of parental authority, or their sullen submission to the restraints of home, meditate such a change as this! Think of the consequences of the rash act of 'enlisting' before they commit it, and may those who in an unguarded moment have committed it, do the best, and all that is left them—to bring good out of evil. Let them avoid 'desertion'—this will only expose them to greater evils. Their first business is, "Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." True religion will soften the rigor of their situation—and prepare them for future danger and distress—or make way for their return to their father's house. Honorable dismissal from the service is what they should seek—and in order to this, they should commend themselves to their superiors as having learned wisdom by experience, and as being prepared to settle down to habits of application, and the pursuits of business.

But if a discharge cannot be obtained, let them reconcile themselves to the disquietudes, dangers, and distress of their situation—by the recollection that they were the authors of their own misery—by a line of conduct that will conciliate the affections of those around them, and help their advancement—and especially by true penitence and piety, which will, when every other source of comfort is closed—open in any situation—streams of consolation whose waters will never fail. Let them become good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and his service will soften the hardships of every other.

The **moral dangers of foreign residence** are most imminent. You are then not only more than ever, and farther than ever, removed from parental inspection and restraint—but you are removed also from the control of friends and of public opinion. You will have an opportunity—if you choose to embrace it—for gratifying to the greatest excess every sinful youthful passion, and every criminal appetite. And multitudes are swept into an early grave abroad in consequence of their enormous lusts—or

else become confirmed forever in habits of immorality!

The motives which lead young men to sea are rarely laudable, and often criminal—as the following impressive fact will prove. Read it with attention.

Two young men, the children of pious and wealthy parents, felt themselves exceedingly displeased at the restraints of their parents. In their madness, or in their folly, they determined leave their home, and stole away to sea. News of this step was transmitted to the Rev. John Griffin, and he was requested to make diligent inquiry—and on finding them, to use every possible means to induce them to return. After some search, he found them among wicked companions. After much persuasion, he induced them to leave that wicked house, with the intention of accompanying him to his house. One of them, on the way, looked in Mr Griffin's face, somewhat amusingly—but with much obstinacy said, "I recognize you—you are a minister—I will not go with you!" But Mr Griffin now interposed with much firmness, and at length succeeded in bringing both of them to his house. He now pleaded with them, with tears of pity—he implored them with the feelings of a parent—he warned them as a Christian minister. One of them was overcome with the pastor's humility, and force of his subduing and fatherly eloquence.

The youth who promised to return, went back, and it is believed became a respectable and pious man. The other obstinately refused to return, and on his finally, after much patient persuasion, persisting in the expression of his determination to go to sea, Mr. Griffin said, "Well, young man, if you go, remember it is in disregard of the persuasive tears of your family, and the advice and remonstrance of your friends. I can now do no more for you, than remind you solemnly in the words of Scripture—Be sure your sin will find you out!" The obstinate young man acted on his expressed determination—and his younger brother returned to his home alone.

Some time after, a letter was delivered to Mr. Griffin one morning by a sailor, who stated that it had come from a prisoner in a ship, not far away, who had been sentenced to

death. Mr. Griffin immediately went to that ship. On his arrival at the ship, he was conducted to the prisoner, who was found confined, and heavily ironed. He said, "Well, young man, I have come at your request, and I hope to do you good; but why did you send for me? I do not know you." "Oh, sir—don't you recognize me? Don't you remember, some time ago, saying to a young man in your own parlor, who refused to return home with his brother—Be sure your sin will find you out?" Mr. Griffin's feelings may be more easily conceived than described.

The youth's offence, was that of having violently struck his captain while on duty, which, especially in a time of war, was considered a crime so dangerous, from its tendency to traitorous mutiny, that it was generally supposed the death sentence would be executed. But no serious personal injury on the individual officer had been inflicted; and considering 'a youth' to be the offender, mercy might be pleaded for. At least, such was the opinion of Mr. Griffin. Without having excited any hopes in the mind of the condemned youth, or having even informed him at all of his intention, he at once resolved to use his utmost exertions to procure the pardon of the unfortunate young man—or at least the mitigation of his punishment.

In kind consideration of his application, and of simultaneous ones on the part of the family—the fatal sentence was remitted, and not only the life of the youth spared—but a free pardon generously granted.

The news of this did not, it is understood, arrive until early on the morning appointed for the execution. Mr. Griffin was permitted to be the person first to disclose this happy news to this hitherto hopeless youth. It would be in vain for anyone not present to attempt to portray the intensely interesting character of this blessed scene. It is more likely to be productive of a true effect on the mind of the reader—to leave the matter for his own imagination.

The fact just given is replete with salutary warning to all young men—not to neglect the advice of pious parents—nor to violate the commands of God. While, at the same time, it admonishes them, if unhappily they have done so—to repent

of their sins, and to alter their course—instead of fleeing from parental restraint to the dangers of a seafaring life. Wherever they go, their sins follow after them—and sooner or later will find them out. In some few cases, the fugitive who has, like Jonah, fled from duty to sea, has been overtaken by the fearful visitations of the Almighty, and brought to repentance by a mixture of judgment and mercy. But in by far the greater number of instances, those who betake themselves to the sea, under the influence of indolence, unsettledness, or sin—become abandoned in character—and miserable in circumstances.

There are some who are gone, or about to go abroad, at the call of duty. Their course of life lies that way, and they are yet happily free from vice, and even from unsteadiness of temper. To such I would say—Do not leave your native land without real and decided religion as your companion in travel—or if you have left it without this friend, protector, and guide, instantly seek its possession. True religion will soften the pang of separation from your relatives, will open a source of happiness on the voyage, and will cover you with a protecting shield, amid the dangers of a foreign land. As you travel, or as you dwell among a strange people, often alone and without a friend with whom to converse, you will feel, and sadly feel, your forlorn and desolate condition—and when the hour of sickness comes, and you are laid up with a fever or consumption in a land of strangers, oh, think of the long nights and weary days of restlessness and pain, with no mother, no sister near to nurse and comfort you, no, none but strangers, and they perhaps, speaking a language you do not understand! will not true religion be needed then? Would not true religion soothe you then? Yes, it would be your nurse, your friend, your comforter, your support!

What can more beautifully or affectingly prove and illustrate the power of true religion in the most trying circumstances and appalling danger, than this touching fact. Let me therefore entreat you to seek the same source of consolation. Not only take the Bible in your trunk—but its influence in your heart. Cut off from the means of grace, surrounded by Pagan, Mohammedan, or Popish rites—all of them superstitious, and some of them polluting—you will be in danger of losing all sense of piety when you need it most.

Fear God, and you will be safe and happy, wander or rest wherever you may; for He is there—reverence his presence, obey his authority, enjoy his favor, and you are blessed. You may die, and leave your bones in a foreign land; but, as one of the sages of antiquity said, "Every place is equally near to heaven."

2. ORPHANS. For you my tenderest sympathies are awakened, and my most affectionate anxieties engaged. You are, indeed, away from home; for you have no home but that which you occupy as an apprentice, shopman, or clerk. The grave has closed over your father and mother; and that habitation once the scene of your childhood, and which you then never entered but with delight—is now the residence of strangers. That threshold you will never cross again. A father's hand, a mother's smile, will welcome you no more to that abode. But you can never pass it even now, without looking up to the chamber window, within which the quiet nights of childhood were slept away in comparative innocence and peace, and saying with a sigh, "My mother,
'Life has passed
With me but roughly,
since I saw you last.'"

Oh! this is a cold and selfish world! Those who would have loved and befriended you, if not for your own, yet for your parents' sakes, have forgotten you; and perhaps, even in the circle of your relatives, you find scarcely anyone who interests himself in your behalf. There was an orphan of old, who cheered himself thus, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." He found it so, and left his experience upon record for your encouragement and hope. Go to the same God by faith, by trust, and prayer—and seek his favor, his guardianship, and guidance. He will be your Friend, and never forsake you. He will be a Father to you, and will never be removed by death. He styles himself, and it is one of his tenderest titles, "The father of the fatherless." His friendship will be more than a compensation for all you have lost, and he will raise up other friends on earth for you.

What have you lost in earthly parents—which cannot be

more than made up in God? "What have I lost," you say, "what have I not lost? They were my dearest, my kindest, my most valuable friends—their counsels guided me, their care protected me, their daily converse was the joy of my life, their sympathy revived me, and their bounty supplied my needs. And now that they are gone, how justly may I say, that my dearest comforts and hopes lie buried with their precious remains!"

Well, but cannot God counsel you, protect you, converse with you, sympathize with you, supply you—far more effectually than they did? Your father and mother are dead—but God, your heavenly Father, can never die. If you commit your way to him, by holy fear and earnest prayer, he will guide you through all the intricacies of life, protect you amid its dangers, comfort you under its sorrows, and conduct you safely, notwithstanding your gloomy prospects, through this mortal life, until you come at last to your Father's house in peace. Seek to have God for your Father, and you will never lack a friend. Choose true religion, and you will never lack a portion. Unite yourself with the church of Christ, and you will never lack a home.

But, at the same time, you should be told that you can expect no safety—but from piety. Left at an early age without the guides and guardians of your youth, without the check and restraint that even a distant father, while he lived, imposed by his correspondence, you will be an object for Satan's wiles, and for the arts of those who lie in wait to deceive. There are many who date their ruin from the day of their parents' death, and consider that event as the commencement of their downward career. Some have plunged into drunkenness to hush their sorrows, increased by the selfishness and unkindness of friends—while others, who had hitherto felt a parent's admonitions an impediment to a life of sin, have rushed into vice, as soon as this obstacle was removed by death. If either of these dangers be yours, may your parent's venerable figure appear to your imagination, as troubled by your misconduct, and warn you from a course of sin, which, if persisted in, will lead to destruction. You have lost them for a season, and will you by sin lose them forever?

3. Pious young men. You form a happy and an important class, if not a numerous one. Rich and sovereign mercy has called you out of darkness, and made you the children of light. Bless God, that while so many are walking according to the course of this world, and fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind—you are walking in the ways of godliness and peace. And while you are thankful, be humble, be circumspect, and prayerful. You are, and will be exposed to great and painful trials of your steadfastness. Perhaps you are placed in a situation, where you find not one like-minded with yourself. You alone are "faithful found among the faithless," and will need great grace to stand your ground against the annoyance, ridicule, and opposition, with which your religion will be assailed, by a set of mirthful, wicked and profane youths.

It is of vast importance, that you should at once, and without hesitation, let it be seen and known that you fear God. Let there be no attempt to conceal your principles or your practices. Let those with whom you are to associate, know at your first entrance among them, that you profess to regard the claims of true religion. If you begin by concealing your principles, it will be extremely difficult to exhibit them afterwards, and thus your life will be wretched under the stings of conscience reproaching you for cowardice, and the dread of open avowal. Moreover, you will often be obliged, or tempted at any rate, in order to keep up the delusion—to do things which you know to be wrong, and thus bring much remorse into your bosom. Remember who has said, "Whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." **Pray** much, and pray earnestly and believingly, for moral courage. Entreat of God to be with you. Beseech him to stand by you, and uphold you with a strength greater than your own.

You will be in imminent peril without great **watchfulness**. Every ingenious art and device will be tried to shake your constancy. The licentious or skeptical book will often be placed in your way. You will be besieged, and if the smallest breach be made, in even the outworks of your character, the advantage will be plied against you until the whole is carried

by storm or surrender. The first temptation presented by your companions will be to small offences—to matters of doubtful or debatable propriety, and if these succeed, they will become more bold. Steel your heart against ridicule. Betray no irritability. Bear all with dignified meekness. Petulance will only provoke to greater annoyance. Forbearance on your part will be most likely to induce them to desist. They will soon feel, that it is useless to laugh at a man, who accounts their scorn his praise, and who glories in their reproach as his honor; and they will at length respect the firmness of mind, strength of principle, and heroism of character—which their assaults can neither break nor bend.

It will tend much to your defense and stability, by inspiring them with respect, if you are skillful in your business, and possess a well-cultivated mind. Strive to be superior in all that constitutes the clever tradesman or professional man, and the well informed man. Convince them, that although true religion is the enemy of sin—it is the friend of all that can benefit and adorn humanity. Study well and deeply the evidences of revealed religion, and make yourself intimately acquainted with the method of meeting all the objections of the popular infidelity of the day.

But especially **be consistent**. Let your piety be unvarying and universal, and interwoven with the whole texture of your character. It should produce, not only the fear of God—but the love of man—it should blend the amiable and the devout, the cheerful and the serious, the useful and the happy. You should seek, by the steady consistent influence of **example**, as well as by the occasional and well-timed persuasion of direct address—to reclaim those who are gone astray. You should judiciously and affectionately warn your associates, who are seeking the pleasures of sin—of their danger. You may be honored to convert them from the error of their ways, and save their souls from death. It is astonishing what small means may sometimes do much good, even when nothing is said, and where it is only **the power of example** that operates.

As a proof of this, I will mention a fact which I know to have occurred in the history of a well-known and successful minister of the gospel. At the time of leaving home, he was

strictly moral, and had some veneration for godliness; but soon became careless and indifferent. He could not, however, give up all attention to the welfare of his soul. It was his custom to retire to his room for prayer on Sundays between the public services of true religion; neglecting it at all other times, and being ashamed to pray in the presence of his fellow apprentice. Aware of the sinfulness of his conduct, and lacking the courage and resolution to change, he earnestly and sincerely besought God to raise up someone in the house to help and guide him in this momentous concern. After a time, a third apprentice was taken into the business. The first night he slept in the house, on retiring to bed, he fell on his knees, and continued some time in prayer. The effect of this upon the mind of the youth, whose history I am relating, was instantaneous and powerful. It seemed to him as if a voice, in impressive accents, said, "Behold the answer of your prayer—there is the individual sent to guide you into the way of true religion."

Serious reflection followed; his conscience was awakened; his heart was stirred; and decided piety was at length the result. He was introduced by his companion to a circle of pious friends, and after a year or two, exchanged secular for sacred pursuits, went to college, became a minister of the gospel, and has been greatly honored by the usefulness both of his preaching and his publications. And I have heard him say, that he traces up all his usefulness to the prayer of that youth, who had the moral courage to bend his knee and acknowledge God before his new companions, from whom he plainly saw he should receive no countenance in the habits of piety. This fact should be a motive and an encouragement to those who have any sense of true religion never to conceal it—but to let their light shine before others, that they, seeing their good works, may glorify God their heavenly Father.

4. PRODIGALS. By this term, I mean those young men who find their picture drawn by the pencil of inspiration in that most touching and beautiful of all our Lord's parables, usually denominated the "Prodigal Son." Oh, could I hope that some of this class will read these pages, I should entertain the further expectation that what I now address to

them would be the means, under the blessing of God, of conducting them from the paths of sin—to those of wisdom, piety, and peace. You have left your father's house, because, perhaps, you could not endure its rules and restraints, and have well-near broken your father's heart—after having considerably impoverished his circumstances by your idleness, extravagance, and dissipation—and you are still going on in the career of vice and destruction.

Permit me to plead with you, first on **your own account**. I need not ask if you are happy; for it is impossible you should be, unless folly, sin, and shame can make you so. Oh no, there are moments when you are awakened by reflection to the horrors of your situation, and, under the united influence of remorse and despair, are ready to put an end, by suicide—to your miserable existence. You have proved the deceitfulness of sin, which promised you pleasure—and has inflicted unutterable misery. You have found the yoke of Satan to be galling iron to your neck—instead of the happy freedom under which his service was set forth to captivate your youthful imagination. Rise, deluded, degraded, and half-destroyed youth—against these murderous tyrants, who have brought you to the brink of the pit—but have not yet, with all their artifice and cruelty, thrust you into it! You are not yet irrecoverably ruined for earth—nor enclosed in the prison of hell. Bad as you are, there is hope for you—yes, even for you! Turn, oh turn, from the road that leads to destruction!

Think, I beseech you, upon **your parents**, not quite but almost crushed into the grave by your evil ways. It is not yet too late to restore their peace of mind, so long broken by your misconduct; nor the elasticity of their frame, so heavily pressed down by years of trouble—brought on by your guilty wanderings. "None but a parent's heart can know the anguish of parting with a sweet babe." But there is an agony deeper and more inconsolable than that. It is occasioned by a wicked son. I have seen one mother pour forth, from a heart which no consolations could reach, tears of bitterness over a perverse and wicked son, and have heard her say, "Would that my son had died in his infancy!" Hasten, hasten, young man, that by your reformation you may spare your

mother the anguish of saying with her last breath, "I am dying of a broken heart—my son, my wicked and unhappy son, has killed me!"

Unless you soon repent and arise and go to your father, and say, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in your sight," you will lie down in the grave of a parricide, and have inscribed, by the finger of public infamy, upon your tomb, if a tomb shall be given you, "Here lies the murderer of his father and his mother!"

The last stab, however, is not yet given to them; the dagger of your unkindness, and your profligacy, has not yet reached a vital part, and all their other wounds may be alleviated if not perfectly healed—by your reformation. Yes, that venerable pair may yet say, if you will permit them to do so, by your conversion to God, and consequent holiness, "It is fit that we should make merry—for this our son was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found." Brothers, who had long since disowned you, as far as they could do it, may yet restore you to their fraternal love. Sisters, who once regarded you as their joy and boast, when they saw you leave your father's home, a fair and promising youth—but who, in your fallen condition, could never hear your name pronounced without blushes and tears, shall again, if you repent, exclaim with throbbing hearts, "My brother!" O prodigal, return! Return by true repentance and faith to God, your Father in heaven, and in the same state of mind to your father on earth. Both are looking out for you—both will receive you—both will rejoice over you!

Numerous instances might be mentioned to awaken hope, and encourage this return. Do not despair of amendment. Do not say, there is no hope. None, not even you—are too bad to be reclaimed. Read the beautiful parable to which I have already referred. What prodigal can wander further, sink lower, or seem more out of the way of recovery, or more remote from the region of hope—than he was? Yet he was restored! And why was the parable spoken, and why was it written—but to encourage hope, in cases seemingly the most deplorable and abandoned?

I knew a case, which is both a salutary warning against sin,

and an encouragement to those who have gone far and long astray—to consider that it is never too late to repent. One winter evening as I was sitting by my fire, I heard a knock at the door, from a person who wished to speak to me. I went out, and found a shabby-looking, dirty, squalid creature, who, after some apology for the intrusion, introduced himself as the son of ——. I had heard for many years of his evil career, and lamented it, for his father's sake, who was an eminent minister of the gospel, as well as for his own. Although I had known him in his better days I did not recognize him in his prodigal appearance. As soon as he was seated in the dining-room, and I had the opportunity more clearly to see his degradation and wretchedness, I burst into tears, and he too was affected to see that the knowledge of his wicked career had not extinguished all my sympathy for his misery. I fed him, and he departed.

This youth, after being spoiled by his mother, whose only child he was, and who, though she erred in this instance, was in most others, an admirable woman, became wayward at home, and unsettled abroad. He formed some bad associations, and contracted some bad habits, among which was a fatal propensity to drinking. By various plans formed and broken, about settling in business, he wasted all his inheritance, and became dependent on his friends, still retaining his habits of idleness and drinking. One situation after another was found for him, by those whose kindness he defeated in all their attempts to help him; until, at length, wearied in endeavoring to help a man who would not help himself, all were obliged to give him up.

His ruin now was complete. He became a total vagabond, and roamed through the country, herding with the lowest wretches, sometimes begging, and resorting to all kinds of methods to procure a meager sustenance and drag on his miserable life. On one occasion, he called upon a friend of his father's in London, in such a beggarly, filthy condition, that before he could be admitted into the house, a tub of water was placed in an out-building that he might cleanse himself, a change of clothes was given him, and his rags instantly burned. Thus clothed and fed, it was hoped he might now do better, according to his promise—but in a few days, all was pawned, and he was again clothed in rags, that

he might drink with the few shillings obtained as the balance in this barter of decent apparel—for that which merely covered his limbs. Thus he went on, until he had become a frequent inmate of workhouses, lock-up houses, and prisons. He had associated with the offscouring of society, had become hardened in vice, and almost stupefied by poverty and woe; and, one would suppose, had been long lost to every sense of decency, and every hope or desire of reformation.

Yet, this prodigal of prodigals, at last found his way back to his heavenly Father's house. In his wanderings, he rambled into a town, where he made himself known to a minister of the gospel, who felt an interest in him for his reverend father's sake. This gentleman, not discouraged or disheartened by the numerous disappointments which had already occurred, took him under his care, clothed him, and procured him support. The prodigal's heart melted under this distinguished kindness; his mind opened to pious instruction; and repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ followed. He lived long enough to make a consistent profession of true religion, and died in the peaceful hope of that blessed world into which "nothing enters that defiles, or works abomination, or makes a lie." His repentance, however, came too late to gladden the spirit of his mother; (his father had died before his wicked course commenced;) her constitution was impaired by grief, and she sank broken-hearted to the grave. What a meeting in the heavenly world—who can imagine it—of this hopeless, disappointed, and sorrow-stricken mother—and this returned prodigal, the source of her deepest grief, and the hastener of her death!

Prodigal son, was there ever a seemingly more hopeless case than this? Is yours more hopeless? Turn, then, from your evil ways. God's mercy, through Christ, is great enough to pardon even your sins, if you truly repent and sincerely believe in the promise of salvation. The Holy Spirit can change even your hard heart, if you wish to be changed, and if you pray in faith for the grace that is necessary to effect it.

If your parents yet live, return to your father's house

reformed, and do all that can be done to heal the wounds of his bleeding heart, and to wipe away the tears from your mother's eyes. Make them yet rejoice that you are their son. In the evening of their existence, let there be light. Let their grey hairs go down to the grave, not in sorrow—but in joy! And let it be a consolation to them on their death-bed, that they have received you, penitent and reformed—to their earthly home, and hope to meet you and dwell with you forever in their heavenly mansion!

Or, if your repentance comes too late to halt their progress to the tomb, or cheer their hearts, sickened and saddened with the foreboding that they are parting from you forever—go sorrowfully all your days, at the thought of having shortened their existence by your sins. But still comforted and sustained by the hope that they were among the spirits in heaven who rejoiced over your repentance, and that they gave utterance to their joys among the angels of God, saying, "Rejoice with us, for this our son was dead—and is alive! He was lost—and is found!" There is a home for all truly penitent prodigals, in heaven! And there is a home for all impenitent ones—but it is, in hell!

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