

Addresses to Young Men

Consisting of:

*The Young Man's Friend and Guide
through Life to Immortality*

and

The Young Man from Home

John Angell James



Soli Deo Gloria Publications
... for instruction in righteousness ...

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THE YOUNG MAN'S FRIEND AND GUIDE
THROUGH LIFE TO IMMORTALITY.

Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me
to glory.

P R E F A C E .

I INSCRIBE this volume to every young man, who, by the prompting of his own mind, or by the persuasion of others, shall be induced to peruse it. To every such youth, I say, with all seriousness and earnestness, ponder well its title "The Young Man's Friend and Guide through Life to Immortality." Do you desire a friend? I offer myself: and I believe you will find me to be such in these pages. Do you need a guide through life, with all its duties, temptations, and perplexities? I am willing to perform this service for you: and I dare pledge the truth power and love of God, that if, by his grace, sought by faith in Christ and fervent prayer, you follow the directions here laid down, you will rise to respectability usefulness and comfort in this world, and everlasting happiness in the next.

Eternal and Almighty God! thou Source of light love and purity, who didst send thy seraph with a coal from off thine altar to purify thy prophet's lips; and didst cause thine Holy Spirit to descend, like cloven

tongues of flame, upon the heads of thine apostles ; and who art still willing to grant wisdom to all who seek it through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ ; send down thy blessing upon the youth of our age and nation ; and grant, in thy great mercy, that many of them may by this volume be guided in safety through the dangers of this sinful world, and led, by patient continuance in well-doing, to glory honour and immortality in the world to come. Amen.

CHAPTER I.

PREPARATION FOR LIFE.

Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eye-lids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. PROVERBS iv, 25, 26.

I THINK you cannot be ignorant, Young Men, that I have felt a great solicitude for your moral and spiritual welfare, and have taken some pains to promote it. I say, your moral and spiritual welfare; for in an age like the present, when education is so much improved, and so widely extended, when the discoveries of science and the inventions of art have been so rapidly multiplied, and the means of knowing them have been placed to such an extent within the reach of the multitude, there is danger lest that which is moral and spiritual should be neglected amidst the attention to that which is merely intellectual; lest talents should be appreciated more highly than virtues, and secular, be more eagerly sought than religious, knowledge. Yet it must be obvious to you upon reflection, that happiness, even for this world, to say nothing of the next, depends much more upon the state of the heart and the practice of the life, than upon the culture of the understanding. Not that these are antagonistic to one another. None but infidels, or weak-minded Christians, will ever attempt

to set piety and science at variance. They are neither enemies nor aliens, but friends, and reciprocally helpful to each other. Under the influence of this anxiety to promote your moral and spiritual well-being, I have, in the course of my ministry, addressed to you several courses of plain and practical discourses; and have also published a treatise to those of your class who have left the parental roof to embark on the stormy and dangerous ocean of human life. I have been rewarded for this "labour of love," by the attention with which my efforts have been received, and the benefit which I believe they have imparted, and am thus induced to continue them, and now invite your serious and meditative attention to the following course of subjects.

- I. Preparation for life.
- II. Entrance upon life.
- III. Indecision as to religion.
- IV. Amiability without religion.
- V. Perplexity occasioned by Religious controversies.
- VI. The character of Joseph.
- VII. The study of the book of Proverbs.
- VIII. Failure or success in business.
- IX. Emigration.
- X. Disappointment or fulfilment of the hopes of parents.
- XI. The importance of the present age.
- XII. Death in youth or the review of life in old age.

You will perceive at once that these subjects are all of an entirely practical character. Speculation and controversy are, with one exception, both excluded: and even doctrinal matter is but sparingly introduced. Not

that these things are unimportant or unnecessary in their proper place, but they do not come within my design. I am a practical man, and am most at home on practical subjects: and at the same time that I believe that holiness is founded upon truth, and that christian duties are drawn from christian doctrines, and are to be enforced by them, I am still of opinion that what is practical will be more for your edification, than what is theoretical or controversial. Speculation, novelty, dry criticism, or thorny controversy, will have a less beneficial influence upon your future character and happiness, than the subjects contained in this course.

My first chapter is on preparation for life. We often speak of preparation for death; and most momentous, most necessary that is, but we too much neglect to speak of preparation for life. And yet how fit is such a subject for our discourses, and your serious consideration.

The passage of Scripture placed at the head of this chapter is much in point. It is selected from a portion of Scripture which is of incalculable value, and which proves that the Bible is a book, not only to make men wise unto salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ, but to serve as a guide to them in their passage through this life, and in reference to their temporal condition: a book to form not only the saint and the devout man, but the tradesman, the parent, and the member of domestic and social life in general.

In the passage quoted above, you will at once perceive that a habit of consideration and forethought is inculcated. We must not only consider the past by looking back, or the present by looking round, but the future by looking on. All these are important; we must look back to consider what we have done that we should not

have done ; what we have not done that we should have done ; and what we have done well, that we might have done better ; that thus from the past we may draw lessons for the future. It is true that in your case so short a space of life has yet elapsed, as to afford comparatively few materials for reflection, and little aid for your future guidance. But even youth has something to look back upon, and the practice of retrospection cannot be adopted too early. It is well to begin life with the formation of a habit of self-scrutiny and self-accountability.

We must also consider well the present, because there is always some duty now to be done, the doing of which is our immediate business, which no reflection on the past and no anticipation of the future, should lead us to neglect. Still, however, we must let our "eyes look right on, and our eyelids look straight before us." We have not only memory, but a certain measure of prescience. True, we cannot look into futurity, so as to ascertain particular events, but we can anticipate general conditions ; and it is a mark of a well-governed mind to anticipate the future as far as possible. We should consider what in all probability is to happen to us, and prepare for it. Young people are not unapt to look forward, but rather in a sentimental and romantic, than in a practical, manner, and as an exercise of the imagination rather than of the judgment. Be thoughtful, then, and let your thoughtfulness have respect to the future. Let your eyelids look straight on ; and ponder the ways of your feet.

There is a world of practical wisdom in some single terms : among them is that momentous term, prepare. How many evils, in some cases, would have been avoided,

had men prepared to meet them ! How many benefits would have been secured, had men prepared to appropriate them ! How much that they have done would have been better done, if they had prepared to do it. How often, already, have you had regretfully to say, "I wish I had prepared for this !" Well then, let this impress you, and guide you for the future. Let your own limited experience in the little things which have yet happened, be a warning to prepare you for the greater ones which will happen. I know very well that the opposite evil of always preparing and never acting, which is the case with some, is also to be avoided. There are many who are ever getting ready to act, but when the moment for acting arrives, are so irresolute, so timid, so procrastinating, that they let the time for acting go by. But this is by much the rarer case of the two. This chapter, then, meets you about to enter on life, and it gives out to you the momentous note of preparation.

Preparation is often half the doing ; and the easier part too. Preparation for life ! How impressive an idea ! Not for one particular act, or scene, or engagement, but for the whole of future existence. Life ! How much is included in that weighty term. A love of life is an instinct of our nature, wisely implanted in us for important purposes by the Great Author of our existence. It was the language of truth, though uttered by the father of lies, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, will he give for his life." Surely, then, if it be incumbent upon us to prepare for everything else, it must be of incalculable moment to prepare for life, since it is the most valuable thing we can covet or possess.

But it will be asked, perhaps, what is meant by

preparing for life? I intend then by it, preparing to act well our part upon earth, so as to secure to ourselves the greatest measure of happiness and usefulness in this world, and eternal happiness in the world to come: preparing to live successfully, religiously, usefully, and happily, so as to secure to ourselves the promise of God to Abraham, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing."

The injunction to prepare for life implies that whatever constitutes the felicity and usefulness of life must be matter of choice, pursuit, and labour; that it will not come spontaneously. This is very true. The continuance of even existence itself, is not independent of man's own volition, action, and preparation. We do not live in spite of ourselves, or without ourselves, the vital spark at first communicated to us without our own acting, is still fed and sustained by our own action. We take food and medicine, and wear clothes, and dwell in habitations, to preserve life; and we must manifest no less solicitude, and put forth no less effort, to secure the blessings of life. It depends very much upon every man's own choice and labour, how life turns out.

To spend life in happiness and usefulness, we must prepare in the early stages of it, for what is future. There is no truth in the Platonic notion of the pre-existence of human souls. We cannot in another and antecedent state anticipate our existence on earth, and go through a training in some previous world, and thus learn how to act our part here. Such an advantage, if indeed it would be an advantage, is denied us. We must come into life and learn as we go on. We must by thoughtfulness, observation, and experience, pick up knowledge by the way. This wonderfully increases the

peril of our situation, and the necessity for our cultivating and exercising a reflective and cautious habit. Still though we cannot in a previous state of existence anticipate our dwelling and conduct upon earth, we may be trained for the subsequent stages of our being by the conduct we pursue in the earlier ones. We cannot first live to know how to live, but we can be educated for the future in the first part of life. Boyhood and youth are life, physically considered, as well as manhood and old age; but intellectually, morally, and socially considered, they are rather introductory to life, than life itself. I am, therefore, in this view of the subject, to consider the processes preparatory for future life.

I. First of all, is Education. I am aware that most of those who will read this work, will have passed through their school-days already. Yet this will not be the case with all, and the subject is so important that I must say a few things upon it. Education includes on the part of those by whom it is conducted, not only instruction, but the right application of knowledge to practical purposes; in other words, the formation of character. This is beautifully expressed in the proverb, "Train up a child in the way he should go." Not merely in what he should know, but in the way he should go. And this should ever be remembered by the pupil as well as the teacher. His mind is, of course, to be stored with knowledge, but his judgment, heart, will, and conscience, must also be trained to act rightly. The term of school education is of immense consequence to future life, and should, and does, lead all considerate parents most anxiously to look out for suitable persons to entrust with the education of their children, when they are no longer able them-

selves to educate them at home. But however judicious the selection of a teacher may be, all young persons should recollect that every one must, to a certain extent, be self-educated, and that it remains with themselves to determine whether the pains bestowed upon them shall be successful or fruitless. It is not in the power of man or woman, or of all men and women combined, to educate a young person, if he will not be educated, or if he does not determine to be well trained. The intellect is not a cup or a bottle into which knowledge can be poured, whether the mind will receive it or not; nor is the heart a piece of passive clay which may be shaped at will by the teacher, irrespective of the will of the pupil. No. It depends on yourselves whether you will be educated. And all your future life, for time and eternity, depends upon your education. "The child is father of the man," and education forms the child. What you are when you leave school, that you may be expected to be through all future existence. Would that I could impress this upon all young persons: would that I could lead them, especially the older pupils, to look forward and to reflect that they have to pass through life, and that they are just entering upon it; and to consider with what measure of knowledge, and with what form of character, they wish to fill up their place in the great community.

II. Self-education must not stop, but be considered as having only just begun when you leave school. You must still carry on your improvement by a thirst after knowledge, a studious habit, and a love of reading, thinking, and observing. Books must be your companions, and if they are good and useful ones, they will be your most profitable associates. In this wonderful

age, when knowledge is so rapidly and extensively widening its boundaries ; when science and the arts are ever astonishing us with new discoveries, inventions, triumphs and wonders ; when they are incorporating themselves with all the practical business of life ; when to be ignorant is not only disgraceful to a man's intellectual reputation, but injurious to his temporal interests ; when to have any weight in society he must know ten times as much as his grandfather knew before him ; and when such facilities are afforded for mental improvement ; no young man can be considered as preparing well for life who neglects the cultivation of his intellect. It is a love of knowledge, young men, not a love of pleasure, that will prepare you to act well your part in life. Understand and remember this.

III. The acquisition of a knowledge of some secular calling is another most important part of the preparatory processes of life. Most of you are intended for business, either in the way of manufacture, trade, or one of the professions, and are already for that purpose apprenticed or articed, to some one who is to teach you your business ; to some one who ought to feel himself bound by every principle of honour, justice, and religion, to instruct you in all you are sent to him to learn. And if the child be the father of the man, so it is equally true that the apprentice is the father of the tradesman. What you are as to industry, application, and ability, now in your term of service and secular education, that you will be in all probability as the future tradesman. Subordination is essentially necessary. We learn to command by first learning to obey. It is of immense consequence to remember this : a refractory, turbulent, disobedient apprentice or servant,

will most probably make a capricious, tyrannical, and ill-judging master. The apprentice whom his master cannot govern, will be the master who cannot govern his apprentice. This is not simply one of the retributions of Providence, but one of the natural results of the course of things. The great principle which gave to the Jesuits such prodigious power in past ages, was unhesitating and unlimited obedience to their Superior. Heroes have usually been trained in the school of obedience and discipline. So our most thriving tradesmen, especially the men that have risen to a high situation, have first served well in a low one. But when I recommend submission and obedience, I mean that which springs from principle, and not merely from compulsion and fear. In this, as well as in every thing else, you should do that which is right to be done, because it is right. Call in your judgment, your conscience, your sense of propriety. It is just and good to obey the authority of a master. The principle of fear, the mere sense of compulsion, will train you badly. The slaves of tyrants, who obey only from dread of punishment, upon their emancipation make the greatest tyrants. A character cast in the mould of fear must be a mis-shapen one. As to capability of application, dispatch, sagacity, quickness, perseverance, in the situation of a master, you must get all these while learning your business as an apprentice. If not learned then, you never will be. An idle apprentice will make an idle tradesman; a pleasure-loving youth a pleasure-loving man. On the other hand, a quick, sharp, clever boy, will make a quick, sharp, clever man. Tell me what the apprentice is, and I will tell you what the tradesman will be. Be diligent, be submissive, be honest, be attentive to business. Determine,

by God's blessing, to excel. Aim to be eminent. Do not be contented with dull mediocrity. Have ambition to stand well and to rise high. A clever, industrious, successful, religious tradesman, is an ornament to his town and his country. Future life is before you, prepare for it thus.

IV. But the chief preparation for life, without which no reliance can be placed on any other preparation, is the formation of a moral and religious character. Having already reminded you how much the happiness and usefulness of life depend, even in this world, upon the formation of character generally viewed, I now refer to religious character. Genuine religion, the parent of sound morality (and no religion is genuine that does not produce morality) is the surest guide to success in this world; other things being equal, he will be almost certain to be the most successful tradesman, who is the most consistent Christian. And as religion is the best guide to happiness in this world, it is the only way to happiness in the world to come. It has been a thousand times told you, on the authority of Holy Writ, that "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is," mark that, "as well as of that which is to come." Who will contradict it? Religion will preserve you from all the habits that tend to poverty and misery, and aid the formation of all that tend to wealth and happiness. Have you ever studied, for I would not so reflect upon you as to suppose you have never read, Solomon's exquisite allegory, in which he so beautifully describes the nature and consequence of true religion? "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise

of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand, riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her." Now the wisdom here so exquisitely described, and so forcibly recommended, is true religion. Who will rise up to say that religion ruined them? And how many millions could rise up, some on earth, and some from hell, to say they were ruined for want of it?

If the formation of character is one of the preparatory processes of life, then you should not have your character to establish, your principles of action to choose, when you want them to use. Your rule should be laid down, your standard adjusted, your purpose formed, when you begin to act. You are about to set sail on the perilous ocean of life, not as a passenger merely, but as both captain and owner of a vessel; and should you not have learned navigation, and have prepared a chart, and a compass, and a sextant, and acquired practical skill to use them? There are rocks and shoals to be avoided, and storms and contrary winds to be encountered, at your going out of port. Without fixed religious principles, and established moral character, you may be wrecked before clearing the harbour. It is of infinite consequence that you should possess the fear of God, a hatred of sin, and dread of judgment to come, before you embark. Remember, therefore, your Creator in the days of your youth. Set the Lord always before you. Be rooted and grounded in the love of Christ.

Be a young disciple, and then you are ready for everything. Religion will be your guide in perplexity, your shield in danger; your companion in solitude; your comfort in sorrow; your defence against temptation: and (if it be genuine, earnest, and consistent) it will not fail to make you holy, happy, and useful.

V. There is another thing I would most earnestly enforce upon you as a preparation for life, and that is, a deep sense of the importance of habit, and the necessity of forming good habits while young. Among the words of our vocabulary which you should select, as having greater importance than others, and as deserving to be more intently pondered upon, is habit. Dwell upon it; it is a golden term of incalculable value. It means the facility of doing a thing well, acquired by having done it frequently, together with a certain impulse or inclination to do it. It differs from instinct, not so much in exercise as in origin; habit being acquired, and instinct natural. I shall not trouble you with a discussion upon the philosophical theory of habit, but only advert to its importance. Consider, then, of what moment it is to do by habit what is right, and thus to have everything which is good and proper to be done made easy; not to have disinclination, difficulty, and awkwardness to encounter every time a right thing is to be done, but to go to it with the impulse and ease of habit; to be good, not only from principle, but from habit. On the other hand, how dreadful is it to be carried forward in the way of evil, by the double force of inclination and habit. Now childhood and youth are the time for forming habits. We see this in the mechanical arts, and it is so in all the mental and moral processes. Industry and self denial, forethought

and caution, religion and virtue, will all be comparatively easy to the man who has acquired the habit in early life. Through God's grace, the most difficult duty, the most rare virtue may thus become easy.

And now let me enforce this preparation for future life upon you. Recollect what it is I am urging upon you. Ponder it well. Weigh it in the balance of reason. It is preparation for life. What a sentence! How pregnant with meaning! Suppose you were going upon a voyage to a strange land, never to return to your own country. Would you not prepare both for the safety and comfort of the voyage, and also for your well-being in the country where you were going to dwell for the remainder of your existence; and would not everybody be astounded at you, if you were busy about a variety of things, and yet gave no care at all to the work of preparation for your voyage and your foreign residence? And what is your life but a voyage to eternity, a state requiring preparation both for itself and what lies beyond it? Now if in the former case you would be anxious to get a safe vessel; to select a skilful and agreeable captain; to choose a comfortable berth; to sail with pleasant companions; to lay in a good stock of necessary articles; and if you would commence the preparation in due time, that when the hour of embarkation arrives you might have nothing to do but to go on board, how much more necessary is it that now in youth, you should be diligently preparing by and by to embark on the ocean of human life. And if in the case I have supposed, you would be still more anxious about the foreign land in which you were going to dwell than even about the comfort of the voyage itself, how much more important is it that you should

be more careful about that eternity to which this life leads, than the comfort of life itself?

Not only does life require preparation, like everything else, but more than everything else. If every situation in life demands previous consideration, provision, and training, if every new scene or pursuit demands an adaptation, a meetness, a bracing up of the mind to it, how much more the whole of life. Who can do well any thing that is novel, difficult, and important, without forethought, plan, and purpose? Who then should think of entering upon life without preparation, and stepping upon the stage of existence without learning to act well a part in the great drama? A life altogether unprepared for, must be a life of perpetual mistakes, faults, and miseries. A man cannot live happily, righteously, usefully, or successfully, who does not prepare to do so : that is, he cannot at all expect to do so, and ordinarily he does not do so.

You are to recollect, young men, that while the brute creation are prepared by instinct for their life, and without any previous education perform all the functions which are necessary to their well-being and to answer the ends of their creation, you can be prepared only by an education in which you must take a part. The bird constructs her nest, the spider her web, the bee her cell, and the beaver his house, by instinct, and they do their work as well and as perfectly the first time as the tenth. They are taught in no school, are apprenticed to no master; there is no preparation necessary for their life. He that gave it, gave all necessary preparation with it. But it is not so in your case. Instinct teaches you to eat, drink, and sleep, and perform other functions of the animal economy; but in

all that pertains to art, science, literature, business, and religion ; in short, in all that pertains to you as social, rational, moral and immortal creatures, you must use your reason, under the guidance, in some things of revelation, and in all, in dependence upon the help and blessing of God. One of the purposes for which this reason is given you, and for which it ought to be exercised, is to prepare for life. It is to assist you of course in life, but it is also to prepare you for it. You must think, compare, choose, weigh evidence, and determine. You must prepare to live, by taking up and fixing in your mind in early youth, certain great principles which unquestionably will not grow and establish themselves there spontaneously. Such for instance as these, That in all things and in all events God is to be obeyed. That there is an essential distinction between sin and holiness, in all actions, thoughts, determinations, and feelings ; and that sin, whatever temporal advantages or pleasures it may yield, is absolutely the most dreadful evil, and ought to be avoided. That nothing ought to be done which must be afterwards repented of. That judgment and conscience should always prevail over inclination. That no good is to be expected from anything without effort and labour. That you should never put off to futurity what can and ought to be done immediately. That what ought not to be done twice, should not be done once. That what should be done at all, should be always well done. And that the future should predominate over the present. Now reason dictates that all these should be written in the soul as the preparation for life. And it is equally clear that reason dictates great caution in drawing practical conclusions, and forming determin-

ations from mere impressions of fancy or feeling, or from some casual situation into which you may be thrown. In other words, you must judge of principles, whether theoretical or practical, good or bad, not by adventitious matters, such as the persons by whom they are held, or the fascinating or repulsive manner with which they are set forth, but by themselves, apart from all circumstances.

Remember, that if God determines to continue you on the earth for any considerable length of time, (as in all reasonable probability he does,) life, with all its situations, duties, trials, cares, difficulties, and responsibilities, will come, whether you are prepared for them or not. You are in life, and must go on in it. Childhood and youth must of necessity leave you in manhood. The time of your entering upon all the unknown solitudes of man's condition on earth approaches. You must soon leave school, if you have not already; and come out of your apprenticeship, if you have not yet done so. You must soon be as that young tradesman who has entered upon the race of competition for a livelihood or wealth. You must soon plunge into the vortex of care and labour which is whirling him round and round on the rapid stream of human life, and its manifold business. All the perplexities which harass his mind, must soon harass yours; all the temptations which assail his integrity, must soon assail yours; and prepared or unprepared, you must meet them. What! enter into that conflict unprepared by forethought, by knowledge, by principle, by habit! Alas! poor thoughtless youth, I pity you, and without a prophet's gift, can foretell what terrible work you will make of life. Poor,

defenceless, untaught lamb, the wolves are before you, and what is to become of you !

That for which you are required to prepare, I repeat, is your whole life, not a particular situation ; not a term of years, however long ; not some contingent circumstance ; but your whole existence upon earth. You may die in youth, it is true, and therefore I admonish you with all the persuasiveness in my power, to prepare by true piety for death ; and nothing else will prepare you for it. Should you die young, I remind you that preparation for life is also preparation for death. Religion, which meetens you to perform well your part on earth, is your education, your training for heaven. True, your education, your knowledge of business, may seem, in the event of your early death, to be useless. But it is not so ; the habits of submission, self-denial, and proper application of your mental powers, which, even in those secular things, were called forth under the influence of principle, all go to the training of your soul for the higher state of your existence. But in all probability most of you will live, some forty, others fifty, others sixty, and some few of you will linger on to seventy or eighty years ; and it is preparation for all this term that is now urged upon you. What a comprehension of scene, circumstance, and situation, does that term include ! Imagine what may happen, must happen, in sixty or seventy years. Through what a variety of situations, temptations, difficulties, trials, changes, even if there be nothing at all extraordinary or out of the common course of man's history, you will be called to pass ! And should not they all be prepared for ? It is impossible for you to foresee the designs

of Providence in respect to you. I would not excite and influence your imagination to anything merely romantic; or set you upon building castles in the air; or lead you to leave off plodding, and to seek in the exercise of unauthorised ambition, by a leap or bound to reach an exalted situation, or by a stroke to grasp a large fortune. Still it is impossible to conjecture what opportunity you may have given you, by patient and successful industry, to rise in life. In this happy country there is no chain of caste which binds a man down to the situation and circumstances of his birth. The very heights of social and commercial life are accessible to all, from whatever low level they commence the ascent. The grandfather of the late Sir Robert Peel was at one time a journeyman cotton-spinner. He that laid the foundation of the greatness and wealth of the Arkwright family was a barber. Carey, one of the greatest linguists and missionaries of modern times, was a cobbler. Stephenson, the great engineer and the first constructor of railways, was a working collier. No one knows what openings God may set before him in life, and should he not be prepared to take advantage of them? This very preparation, in many cases makes the opening. Ignorance, idleness, and vice can never rise. They will ever sink by their own weight, and effectually close any door which Providence might set open. What a painful reflection it is for any man to make in future life, when some rare and golden opportunity presents itself for bettering his condition, "Alas! I cannot avail myself of it. I am disqualified. I made no preparation. With tolerable diligence at school, and during my apprenticeship, I could have fitted myself for it; but my indolence

then, and my folly and sin subsequently, have put it quite out of my power to seize the advantage thus offered me."

Consider, again, if any great mistake, as to the end and purpose of life, and the manner of spending it, should be made for want of due preparation, there is ordinarily no such thing as rectifying it. There is no going back, and beginning again; no living life over again; no profiting by experience; no repetition of the opportunity for preparation. "The wheels of time are not constructed to roll backwards;" nor can the shadow retrograde on any man's dial. There is but one life and one death appointed to any man, and therefore only one opportunity to prepare for death, and only one to prepare for life. All depends on one cast of the die. How momentous that is! How does such an idea deserve to be pondered by every young man! What, only one life in this world, and only one in the next, to be prepared for, and that one neglected! Vain are the regrets and the wishes of the man, who, amidst broken fortunes, poverty, misery, and disconcerted schemes, has thus to reflect, and thus to reproach himself.—"It is my own fault; I have no one to blame but myself. I was forewarned and admonished that life's duties, trials, and happiness, required preparation. Even from childhood I heard it. At school I was inattentive and idle. During my apprenticeship I loved pleasure rather than business. In youth I sought bad companions rather than good books. I neglected all mental culture, and I feared not God. I entered life without any preparation. I have succeeded in nothing, for I was fit for nothing. My only chance is gone. I am prepared for neither world, and now

I am miserable here, and must expect to be miserable hereafter."

How many whose history has verified all this painful self-reproach, have we, who are older than you are, known! You are young, and have not yet seen much of life. Take our testimony, who have. We will not deceive you. We speak that which we know, and declare to you that which we have seen. We have watched the docile scholar, the diligent, industrious apprentice, and the pious youth, as he rose and ripened into the successful, holy, and happy tradesman, and Christian; and thus became the joy of his parents, the ornament of his family, and the blessing of society. While, on the other hand, we have seen with grief those who in their boyhood and their youth manifested an idleness and a waywardness which no culture could instruct, and no discipline correct; who hated knowledge and despised reproof; who, in the spring time of life, sowed the seeds neither of piety nor of social excellence; who made no preparation for life, except it were for an unholy, unfortunate, and unhappy one; we have, I say, seen many such become their mother's shame, their father's grief, the disgrace of their friends, the curse of society, and their own torment and dishonour. Both are common scenes; and you will exemplify one or other of them in your history.

Your own happiness, then, it is apparent, is deeply involved in this preparation. You are created to be happy. God wills your happiness, and has provided for it. You ought not to be indifferent to it. Your happiness is in your own hands. All the world cannot, and God will not, make you happy, irrespective of your own

conduct. Understand at the outset of life this great principle, that happiness arises more from disposition, character, and conduct than from possessions; from what we are, more than from what we have. Its springs, to a considerable extent, lie in your own nature. It is a beautiful saying of Holy Scripture, "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." This deserves your attention, your study, your practical recollection. The happiness of life depends in a great measure upon youth. A bad boy seldom makes a happy man; though God sometimes changes him, and calls him in manhood to an entire renovation. Suppose, for instance, young men, there were two kinds of seeds, one of which you must, by some necessity of nature, or compulsion, sow every spring, and on the fruit of which you must, by the same necessity, live every winter; one fruit bitter and nauseous, and inflicting severe pain; the other, pleasant to the taste and beneficial to the constitution; would you not be very careful which you selected and sowed in your garden, knowing, as you would, what must be the inevitable result? Why, this is your condition of existence and your employment. You are always sowing in youth what you must always reap in manhood. But apart from its results, the very act of preparing for life is itself a part of the happiness of life. Diligence at school, attention to business, mental cultivation, true religion, and good habits, independently of the consequences they bring after them, are themselves the elements of enjoyment. An idle man is the most miserable of God's creatures, except him, who, as is generally the case, adds vice to indolence. Woe to the man who brings upon himself the pains and penalties of laziness.

It is not, however, your own happiness and well-being alone, that will be affected by your conduct and character, but the well-being of others. Your own individuality is something, yea, much to you, and you are not to be indifferent to it. God, by his own authority, protects you against yourself. He says, "Do thyself no harm." He will not allow you to be reckless of your own happiness. He has given you a capacity for bliss, and made provision for it, and accounts it an opposition to his beneficent designs, if you do not endeavour, in His way, and according to His purpose, to be happy. But then you are a social creature, born in society, intended for society, and bound to promote the well-being of society. Most of you will be husbands, fathers, masters, neighbours, citizens; and you ought to prepare to act well your part in all those relations. You will contribute something to the well or ill-being of the community. You will be the nettles, briars, and brambles of the land, or its oaks, myrtles, or fir trees; its strength or its weakness; its beauty or its deformity. Your country has claims upon you. You are therefore to prepare to serve it, and to serve it well. You should by an intelligent and moral patriotism, implanted early in your heart, seek to bless the land of your birth. Piety and sound morality are a nation's strength, more than its armies and its navies; its wealth, more than its commerce; and its glory, more than its literature, science, and victories. Young men, you belong to the greatest nation upon earth; be worthy of your distinction. Cherish more than a Roman's patriotism, without a Roman's pride. Let Britain's present welfare, and her future destiny, be near your hearts. Let your youthful bosom swell with

the noble ambition to do something for the land of your ancestors and your posterity. Add by your prayers a stone to her bulwarks, and by your personal excellence a ray to the glory that beams around her head.

But this is perhaps too large a scale on which to view your influence: too wide a circle for you to see yourself diffusing happiness or misery. Consider, then, the family relationships you will sustain. Look on and anticipate what kind of a husband, father, master, and tradesman, you are likely to make; and how you shall preside over the domestic economy. Some woman's destiny for life will hang upon you, and the happiness of a family, perhaps a numerous one; and then upon their conduct will depend, by an onward succession, the destiny of others to descend from them. You will thus commence a dark or a bright line of human existence, which will run onward through all future generations, and be still going forward when the last trump shall sound. Misery or bliss, at the distance of centuries, or at the very antipodes, may be traced back to you. It is not, therefore, permitted you to be perfectly isolated and neutral. You are not to dwell in a hermitage or a monastery; nor in a cave of the wilderness; nor on some solitary mountain, where no eye will observe you, no ear will hear you; but amidst the busy and crowded haunts of men, where influence to a greater or a smaller extent will go out from you, and you must be the salt or the poison of the earth. You must, you do, mingle with others, whose lot is to a considerable extent mixed up with yours. Ought you not to think of this, and prepare for it? You are destined to light up the countenance of your fellow-creatures with smiles, or to suffuse their eyes with tears; to inflict wounds or to heal them;

to "break the bruised reed," or to "bind up the broken heart." With what emphasis, therefore, may I now say to you, Prepare to live; society, futurity, your country, and the world demand it of you.

But there is another reason, the last, the highest, and most momentous of all, why you should prepare to live; and that is, the life you lead in this world is the preparation for the life you are to live in the next. What the term and purpose of school pursuits, and an apprenticeship, are to the present life, that the whole of the present life is to the one beyond the grave. You are now, and ever will be on earth, in a state of pupilage for heaven and eternity. Upon your fugitive existence in this world hangs your everlasting existence in another. You are constructing a character, the form of which, whatever it be, is to last for ever. How momentous an idea! Yes, there is another world, an eternal world, a world of everlasting and ineffable happiness or woe. Yes, you are immortal beings. Immortality, the highest attribute of God, is yours also. In this, as in other things, God made man in his own likeness. Before you lies the shoreless ocean of eternity. Look over the vast expanse. Every step you take in this world is to heaven or to hell. This little span, this inch of time, our life, is all we have to prepare for all that lies beyond. Human life is the brief, the uncertain, the only preparation time, for those ever-rolling ages. Take this view of it, I beseech you. Meditate on the wondrous theme. Learn at the outset of life, and ever remember through all its future stages, that it is given to you as a discipline and probation for eternity. You have entered upon the trial; the awful probation is going on. Do not let the thoughtlessness of youth hide it from you. Do not let pleasure

lead you to forget it. Do not permit companions to divert your attention from it. There it stands before you, the dread, the glorious, and grand reality of man's existence, Immortality. Look at it, ponder it, I beseech you. Let it possess you, literally possess you. Feel as if you could not cast it out from your mind, as if you would not be dispossessed of the wondrous conception. Repel with indignation the attempt to lead you into an oblivion of this your noblest distinction, your richest birth-right. Treat the man who would despoil you of the right consideration of this your highest dignity, as you would the thief that would rob you of your purse, or the assassin that would destroy your life. Prepare, then, by true religion, for that life which is, in its turn, to prepare you for immortality.

To sum up all I have said, there you are, a rational, sinful, immortal, accountable creature, just about to start in the career of active life, with time and eternity before you, heaven above you, hell beneath you, dangers all round you, and many corruptions and imperfections within you. Does it become such a creature, in such a position, to make no preparation? Whether you think of it or not, two worlds, this and the next, are to be inhabited by you. What your lot may be in the present one, none but He who is omniscient can even conjecture. An impenetrable veil hides the future from your view, and not the smallest rent or opening suffers a single ray of light to reveal what is before you. Whether you shall die young or live to old age; whether you shall fail or succeed in business; whether you shall rise or sink in society; whether you shall wear out existence in sorrow or in joy; no one but God can tell, and he will not. Much will depend upon Him; but let me remind

you, much also will depend upon yourself. Abandon the heathen notion of fate. I believe in Providence, but not in fate, and I admonish you to believe in it also, and by constant prayer to seek its blessing; but do not forget that Providence never blesses idleness, thoughtlessness, negligence, and extravagance. Providence helps those that help themselves. Everything, therefore, cries to you, "Prepare for life." Your teachers, your parents, your masters, your ministers, say to you, "Prepare to live." Your reason, your conscience, your weakness, your ignorance of the world, say to you, "Prepare to live." The prosperity of those who have succeeded, and the poverty of those who have failed, say, "Prepare to live." The duties, trials, difficulties, and dangers of earth, the joys of heaven, and the torments of the bottomless pit, say, "Prepare to live;" and above all, the great God who has given you existence, who is willing to help you to live holily, usefully, and happily, and who will call you into judgment for the manner in which life has been spent, says to you, "Prepare to live." Can you, dare you, will you, turn a deaf ear to voices so numerous, so solemn, so consentaneous?