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COUNSELS

TO

A YOUNG MAN ;

OR,

THE FASCINATING ALLUREMENTS

BY

WHICH HE WILL BE ASSAILED.

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THE BIBLE AND THE SABBATH.

As the sure safeguard from the temptations which will assail you—as the foundation of all moral excellence, the only basis upon which to build a superstructure for usefulness or happiness, we commend to you *the religion of the Bible*. We offer it to you in all its fulness, in all its freeness. You need the atonement which is there provided, the sanctification which is there afforded, the consolation which is there offered. Make the principles of this book the foundation of your faith, its precepts the rule of your life. Take it for your guide: it will teach you steadiness and sobriety in prosperity; it will strengthen you in the day of temptation; it will afford consolation and support in the hour of adversity and trial. Make it as “a lamp to your feet,” and it will enlighten all your way.

And next, we would enjoin upon you a reverence of *the Sabbath*. Respect it as the institution of Jehovah. Value it for the benefits which its right observance confers upon the family of man. Regard it as the palladium of religion and morality, of private virtue and public prosperity. If you would only insure happiness for this life, reverence the Sabbath. Do not profane its sacred hours by travelling, business, or amusement. Do not waste them by idle sauntering or listless indolence. Frequent the sanctuary. Choose your place of worship, and be found in your own seat, a worshipper yourself, and not a mere spectator of the worship of others.

FEMALE SOCIETY.

If it be necessary that companions of your own sex should possess moral excellence, still more indispensably requisite is it in the character of your female associates. Degrade not yourselves by associating with any woman, whatever may be her station, talents, or accomplishments,

COUNSELS TO A YOUNG MAN.

A YOUNG MAN!—How interesting the character to the christian philanthropist! In him he contemplates a spirit immortal, intelligent, accountable, just commencing an endless existence amid special advantages and peculiar dangers. And he sees pending on the first direction of its course, infinite results! Let me then affectionately speak to the youthful reader of the snares and temptations to which he is exposed. These are both *internal*, resulting from the perversion and corruption of the intellectual and moral powers by sin; and *external*, arising from surrounding objects of sense. The latter, however, derive their chief power from their alliance to the former. It is its own native depravity that has thus brought the soul into subjection. The immortal part is controlled by that which is mortal; the spiritual, by the animal nature. Such is the melancholy effect of the apostacy, and hence the dangers which so constantly beset us. In the ardent season of youth, the peril is the more imminent with the increased force of temptation.

The *imagination* is the medium through which our insidious adversary presents some of his most fatal snares, and whatever can minister aliment to a vain and vicious imagination should be most vigilantly shunned.

Of this nature are most of the *fictitious publications* of the present day. The perusal of these you ought to consider as a dangerous snare. At no former period, perhaps, has the press poured forth so profusely this class of literature. Decked in gaudy attire, and embellished with all that can render them attractive, these vehicles too often of licentiousness and infidelity, are scat-

tered through the land, and not unfrequently form the ornaments of the parlor and drawing-room. There they are enshrined, supplanting the useful productions of genius and science, and captivating the mind and heart by their fascinating but destructive influence. Through these polished magazines of temptation the youthful fancy loves to rove, feasting on its poisonous sweets, and eagerly pursuing every new production both as an incentive and a gratifier of its wayward inclinations. That some of these productions bear the impress, and merit the applause of great mental accomplishments, is not to be denied. But it is the impress of talent perverted and abused. And,

While on their pages genius smiles,
Religion drops a tear.

Intellectual effort not being required to any considerable degree in their perusal, the mind becomes impoverished amid these repeated reveries of the imagination, and the deluded youth is gradually unfitted for the sober realities of life; disqualified either to perform its relative and social duties, to enjoy its rational comforts, or to endure its necessary and common afflictions. The world is thus contemplated through a false medium, by which "beauty is painted in colors more charming than nature, and happiness described which man never tastes;" and as quickly as the vision is ended, does the mind become dissatisfied with itself, and disappointed in all with which it finds itself connected. I have watched the process of this mental and moral contamination. I have seen young persons of respectability and promise, with their attention riveted to a volume which their consciences condemned, and which they felt constrained to conceal from their parents. But so fascinated were they with its attractions that, like the bird fluttering beneath

the fangs of the basilisk, or like our first mother in Eden, they could not extricate themselves.

I forbear to expatiate on the prevalence and the baleful influence of publications more directly cherishing licentiousness and atheism, and the more than questionable exhibitions of statuary and painting. "The numbers of the poet, the delightful melody of song, the fascinations of the chisel, and the spell of the pencil, have been all volunteered for the moral ruin of unhappy man." The following resolution of an accomplished gentleman and orator, who feared God,* affords a safe rule for guidance on this subject. Permit me to recommend it to your attention and adoption, with reference to this whole class of temptations: "*I will not read any book which I should be unwilling to have it known that I had read, or the reading of which I shall probably recollect with regret on my dying bed.*"

Theatrical representations are also a powerful auxiliary to the great tempter and destroyer. The mind especially that has been entranced with fiction in private, will desire to see the scenes of unreal mirth and woe with which it has been conversant, personified upon the stage. Hence novels are often converted into plays. The theatre has been called a "school of morals," and its false exhibitions of joy and sorrow, "useful." But this, in truth, is the language of *irony*. You are probably aware that the theatre originated under the government and rites of heathenism, and that it was denounced even by heathen moralists. "Plays," said Plato, "raise the passions and pervert the use of them, and are dangerous to morality." Theatrical exhibitions have ever been condemned in christian countries as highly immoral in their tendency. Even the infidel Rousseau, though he wrote for the stage, resisted the

* Rev. Dr. Porter, late of the Theological Seminary, Andover.

attempt to introduce this amusement into Geneva, on the ground of its deeply corrupting influence. It may justly be styled a "*school of licentiousness*," for within its unhallowed precincts infatuated youth of both sexes learn to witness without a blush, and to hear unshocked, what would not be endured in a private social circle of the least respectability. To say nothing of the avenues to intemperance, gaming, and crime which surround the theatre; there, as in the writings of fiction and romance, the mind becomes familiar with scenes in which virtue is oppressed, and vice triumphs and is vindicated under every false and deceptive plea. The annals of crime furnish the most melancholy facts in countless detail, to illustrate its destructive influence on the character, the prospects, the hopes, in short, the welfare, temporal and eternal, of the young.

The passions and appetites, operating and acted upon through the medium of the senses, form another fruitful source of temptation; their predominance over the reason and judgment is almost characteristic of early life, and is the cause of a large proportion of the follies, crimes, and wretchedness, which mark the temporal if not the everlasting ruin of many of the young. Through the influence of an excited imagination, perverted by such instrumentalities as are already noticed, the arch-deceiver presents the enticements of sensual pleasure. Hence the multiplied warnings of experience in the fate of innumerable victims are generally as powerless and unheeded as are those so faithfully and graphically drawn on the sacred pages. Alas, too often the syren song of pleasure has more charms for unsuspecting youth than the voice of heavenly wisdom. They first listen to her delusive strains, and then yield themselves living sacrifices to her tyrannical and destructive sway. Loss of character, friends, employment, health, and life follow in her train; but what are these, compared with that quenchless rag-

ing of desire, that indelible stain of guilt, and those endless stings of remorse, treasured up against that day, when the results of such a career, however secret, will be felt in eternal banishment from all purity, and the destruction of both soul and body in hell! If you would shun the vortex, "keep thy heart with all diligence." "Be temperate in all things." Avoid every avenue of temptation. "Touch not, taste not, handle not," under any form, the cup of intoxication. Be employed in some profitable study or useful business; for idleness is the fruitful parent of vice—the handmaid of every temptation.

Your *social feelings* likewise expose you to many temptations. You are fond of society—a trait in the human character designed to be a source of our highest earthly enjoyment, and which, when rightly controlled and directed, especially when governed by the principles of piety in the heart, is still promotive of much of our comfort and aid on life's pilgrimage. But it is a painful truth, that our social nature has been rendered, by sin, an instrument of mutual corruption and ruin, through the force of example. Such is the depravity of the heart, that it gives to *vicious* example, and *evil* communications, a cordial reception. The soil is adapted to the seed; and having contracted such an intimacy with others as to yield to them your confidence, the seeds of vice and infidelity may be easily and thickly sown in your heart when you are least aware. When persons meet but seldom, and in public or among strangers, a natural caution, or motives of policy, may induce an artificial demeanor which disguises their true characters; yet even in such circumstances evil example is not without its influence. But the intimacy of private friendship and frequent social intercourse, in which restraint is thrown off, and secret feelings and sentiments are disclosed, affords the greatest facilities to the tempter. You will, I presume, readily admit that such intimacy

with a bold profligate, or one who is under no influence but that of an unsubdued will and unbridled passions and appetites, is extremely hazardous to a young man. And I trust you have contracted no such friendships, or if you have, that you will immediately abandon them, as you value your moral character and immortal welfare.

The example and influence of open profligacy, however, though very corrupting, is not the most ensnaring; for it often counteracts itself by its shocking impiety, and disgusts rather than allures a reflecting mind. It is the companionship of those whose frivolity, practical infidelity, and supreme devotedness to pleasure, are blended with much amiableness of disposition, attractiveness of manner, refinement of taste, mental cultivation, and propriety of outward deportment, that wins the confidence of the youthful heart. They often profess and manifest much respect for the institutions of Christianity, and not unfrequently maintain a "form of godliness." The following lines present the general features of their portraiture:

" Mine be the friend less frequent in his prayers,
 " Who makes no bustle with his soul's affairs,
 " Whose wit can brighten up a wintry day,
 " And chase the spleen of life's dull hours away;
 " Leaves saints to enjoy the mysteries they teach,
 " And plucks the fruit placed more within his reach."

If your feelings and preference in the selection of your companions accord with this language, you may soon place yourself, if you have not already done so, within the fatal vortex of licentious dissipation. All the temptations which I have specified will throng around you with increased power, from the influence of such associates. The restraints of conscience and a religious education, if you have been blessed with one, will be gradually thrown off. You will be tempted in the out-

set to dismiss those serious thoughts which are essentially connected with the future welfare of the soul. Your facilities for poisoning the mind and hardening the heart through the imagination will be augmented; and from the more refined works of fiction and folly you will soon be introduced to an acquaintance with the grosser productions of licentiousness and infidelity. When thus your imagination has become corrupted and your conscience seared, if not before, you will feel no reluctance in a frequent resort to the scenes of dissipation.

Among these, in addition to the theatre, are the *chamber of mirth* and *professed parties of pleasure*. I mean such pleasure as expels seriousness and even reflection, unfits the heart for devotion, and renders it averse to self-scrutiny and meditation in solitude; *pleasure*, which reason as well as the Bible condemns, for its inconsistency with the character and circumstances of man as a sinner, and with his destiny as an heir of immortality; *pleasure*, in the pursuit or enjoyment of which you cannot pray, and dare not die. Whatever has such an influence over the mind and heart, must, in its very nature, be dangerous to your highest interests, although it may receive from the world the stamp of innocency. To these scenes of dissipation you may be often allured, and, ere you are aware, become devoted.

Under this overwhelming influence from the "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," there is another tendency of the youthful heart which adds strength to temptation—its proneness to *overrate or form a wrong estimate of worldly happiness*. Reason teaches that our natures require sources of enjoyment more exalted and enduring than the transient objects of time. Experience seconds the admonitions of reason. The pathway of the young is guarded with beacons, rising amid the wretchedness of the unhappy victims to amusement and illicit pleasure, warning of the impending danger, while the

oracles of God present the same caution, both by precept and example, on almost every page. They denounce as pernicious and destructive to the soul, every scheme and object in the pursuit of happiness, which is at variance with the divine commands, and with an habitual preparation for death and the scenes beyond it. Yet notwithstanding these counsels from reason, experience, and revelation, there is no truth which the young seem so reluctant to accredit, as that mere worldly happiness, from whatever object it is sought, lies chiefly in anticipation; and, when attained, is transient and unsatisfying. They still pursue the visionary chase, urged onward by the example and influence of others, until personal experience alone brings them to reflection.

Let me also caution you against those appeals which may be made to your *pride*, your *curiosity*, or your *love of variety*, to draw you into the snares which the world presents under the disguise of happiness. These appeals are usually made through the medium of *fashion* or the prevailing customs and opinions of society. The power of fashion in the dissemination of vice is very manifest. You may have observed with what self-complacency the youthful disciple in the school of intemperance calls for the social dram with his companions; utters the half-learned epithets of fashionable profaneness; and relates his adventures in some Sunday frolic or scene of fashionable dissipation. With what an air of self-consequence does he spurn parental authority, if indeed he has ever been made acquainted with it; and with what aping of manhood and "swelling words of vanity" does he talk about the *prejudices of education*! Perhaps through no medium does the force of ungodly example harden the heart and sear the conscience more rapidly than that of fashion. To say nothing of the pecuniary risks and embarrassments to which her extravagant demands in *dress*, *equipage*, and *style of liv-*

ing tempt her votaries; they are gradually unfitted for usefulness, and even for the enjoyment of their own schemes of happiness. You cannot guard too cautiously against the influence of fashion over your social feelings, and against the temptations which are thus so thickly spread around you to overrate and inordinately pursue worldly happiness.

The following is not a solitary, nor even a rare occurrence: A youth of pious education and of promise, becomes intimately associated with an amiable, intelligent, and genteel libertine, until, attracted by his fascinating manners and generous disposition, he prefers his society and yields him implicit confidence. His seducer recites some of the less appalling feats in his own career; perhaps the pleasures of the race-ground, the frolics of the chase, or the fascinations of the ball-room or theatre. With the aid of romance the youth is next induced to draw an invidious contrast between the restraints of home and the libertinism of his misnamed *friend*, until his prejudices are enlisted against the former and in favor of the latter. Having heard with interest the description, he is easily tempted, and soon brought within the giddy whirl of amusement.

As he is borne onward from one scene of dissipation to another, he is brought to the *gaming-table*, under some one of its more *genteel* forms, and, at first, merely as a means of diversion. Accustomed from childhood to associate gaming with crime and infamy, he is startled at the temptation. But the presence of his associates, and especially the influence of his *friend*, (who may have also secured him in the fetters of *pecuniary obligation*,) embolden him to throw off these "prejudices of the nursery." Thus the check which an enfeebled conscience attempted to give, is stifled, and that faithful monitor is resisted into silence. He becomes a skilful gambler, and finds the midnight hours too

short for his engagements. Fatigue and exhaustion afford a ready apology for tasting the *cup of intoxication* in the shape of *wine, cordial*, or some other of its more inviting forms, and he retires from the scene entranced with its fascinations. He is now of course an easy prey to these temptations. He soon becomes a *manager* in these sports of ungodliness; and at length, through covetousness or pecuniary embarrassment, is led to employ the gaming-table in all its forms as a source of unjust gain, and ultimately as an altar on which he sacrifices all his temporal prospects. Disappointment and pecuniary ruin now render any intoxicating draught a welcome solace. The haunts of idleness and infamy become his habitual resort, and his associates are now the abandoned and the vile. Reduced to penury, stript of character, and corrupted by sensuality, he becomes the victim of disease, or the reckless perpetrator of crime; and the dram-shop, the brothel, the prison, the gallows, or some other miserable end, form the waymarks of his course to perdition. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Stand aloof, I beseech you, my young friend, from the companionship of the libertine, the free-thinker, and all who evince by their conduct that they "fear not God, neither regard man."

Another general class of temptations to which you are peculiarly exposed at the present day and in this country, are those which arise from THE GENIUS OF OUR GOVERNMENT, AND THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE.

The current of popular feeling is strongly towards natural liberty, or the removal of *all coercion* from individual passion and inclination. It is on this feeling that infidelity fastens its cold and iron grasp, and enslaves the mind under the pretence of *free-thinking*.

The disposition which cannot brook the restraint of faithful domestic government, or has never been subdued by such restraint, is that which sets at defiance the law of God, and ultimately, civil authority. The same influence which would tempt you to obliterate the impressions of early religious instruction, and to resist those salutary monitions of conscience which result from such instruction, will, if cherished, soon destroy your confidence in divine revelation and the truths of the christian religion.

You are beset with temptations also, in the multiplied, various, and often conflicting objects of attention, all claiming the sanction of religious obligation, which, through the freedom of the press, are constantly presented to the public mind. When I reflect on these influences, and the boldness of the advocates of infidelity, who say "Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?" I feel that you stand in jeopardy every hour. Guard especially against that spirit of self-confidence, which, in connection with this feeling of scepticism, will tempt you to arraign God's revelation at the bar of *reason*, as the umpire not only of what it does, but of what it ought or ought not to contain. "Thus saith the Lord, ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

The spirit of enterprise and of change which characterises the present age, is likely to generate a *lawless ambition*—an eagerness for preferment—that is reckless of the means employed to obtain it. Such a disposition can be cherished, and such a course of conduct pursued, only by the abandonment of all moral principle, and the sacrifice of the soul to a fickle popularity. Under a government like ours, where the offices of trust and authority are open to all, and the aspirants are multiform and numerous, the temptations to such a dereliction of moral principle are powerful and dangerous. It

is not necessary to specify the practiced arts of bribery, deceit, intrigue, hypocrisy, falsehood and perjury, or to point you to examples of such sacrifice of character and principle, which are more than sufficient to warn you against this class of temptations.

The production in the heart of an *inordinate love of gain*, is another tendency of the prevalent spirit of enterprise. At no period of our country's history, perhaps, have the temptations which the love of money presents to a young man, been so numerous and formidable. He is surrounded by the example of his superiors in age and experience, who may be accumulating thousands by the transactions of an hour or the throw of a die, and by the multitude incessantly driving forward in the competition for wealth. Amid this current of example, and especially if intimately associated with those who, though they may *profess* better things, are "making haste to be rich," you are exposed to become a devotee of *mammon*; and as such you will be tempted by some of its numerous snares to barter your soul for money! Passing by, at present, the fearful warnings of the Bible on this point, which declares a supreme devotedness to wealth to be an insuperable barrier between the sinner and heaven—more difficult to overcome than for "a camel to pass through the eye of a needle"—let me specify a few of these temptations.

Under the plea of "enterprise" the inordinate pursuit of wealth will tempt you to adopt and practise measures for its attainment inconsistent with the principles of strict justice and equity. "As honest as the times will admit," is a phrase, too frequently expressive of real character. Your *business* may be one which is at variance with the interests of your neighbor, as the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drink, the vending of lottery tickets, or the furnishing of other means of gaming and dissipation, and thus indicate that you

have lowered your standard of morality down to a palpable violation of the Saviour's golden rule of equity.

Or if your business be in itself proper and respectable, an excessive thirst for gain may tempt you to some of those "tricks of trade," so called, which heap guilt upon the conscience and ruin the soul. Of this nature are the concealment of defects in articles sold; extravagant and false recommendations of their qualities; exorbitant and extortionate charges; unjust depreciation of the goods of another; oppression of the hireling in his wages; unjust weights and measures; adulteration and deception in those articles which are susceptible of it, both in their original manufacture and subsequently, and other similar practices. In some forms of business, breaches of trust, or speculations on borrowed capital, may tempt you to leave your creditors penniless, while you live secure from want, if not luxuriously, but with "a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."

I might speak of usury, avarice, and a host of other temptations, incident to the inordinate love of pecuniary gain. But they are innumerable. *Neglect of the means of salvation, and a desecration of the Sabbath to secular purposes,* are not the least among them. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of *all* evil." Mark this declaration. Success in the pursuit of wealth is not necessary to bring you within its ensnaring and ruinous influence. The supreme *love* of mammon may be as fatal to the soul amid the entire defeat of its wishes, as under the noon-tide of prosperity. *Ungratified* covetousness, especially when incited by the demands of dissipated habits and love of sensual indulgence, exposes its subject to the temptations of *fraud, theft, forgery,* and other similar

crimes, which result in ruin even for the present life. Your best safeguard on this subject is the acquirement and preservation of that frame of mind which, in submission to the divine will, prompted the prayer of Agur: "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me. Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain"

I will allude to but one other class of temptations to which you are peculiarly exposed. This is especially an age of revivals of religion, or of *the mission of the Holy Spirit*. You will be surrounded by these gracious movements, and may sometimes feel their influence on your own mind. You will therefore be tempted to sin against this blessed agent in these his vital operations, and thus seal your own death-warrant for eternity. Guard, I entreat you, against every emotion of levity or indifference, to say nothing of contempt and ridicule, which at any time may arise in your mind on this subject. Avoid treating with similar feelings, or even with neglect, the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the holy Scriptures, and other means which God has appointed and blessed for human salvation. Rather give them the place they merit in your esteem and attention; and above all other things, welcome and strive to secure to your own soul the abiding influences of the Spirit of grace, as your only basis for hope, and your only security against the many snares which beset you on your pilgrimage to the grave.

And now, my dear young friend, I must bid you farewell, with the parting exhortation to remember that you are travelling to the grave, and to an endless retribution. If death should spare you, you will soon pass the *spring-time* of your existence, which, if wasted or neglected, can never be redeemed. Your character and destiny, for this world and the next, depend on the stamp,

virtuous or vicious, which that character now receives. Your preparation to meet and sustain the responsibilities connected with your approaching domestic and civil relations in life, is closely connected with your avoidance of the snares which are so thickly spread around you. Yield yourself up to any one of them—make the fatal resolve to test by your own experience the truth of these warnings, instead of trusting to them—and you make shipwreck of virtue, character, influence, happiness, all that renders life valuable or even supportable. Your character forms rapidly; your habits “grow with your growth and strengthen with your strength.” Think of this, if you are looking forward to old age, that your “bones” may not be “full of the sin of your youth.” Beware of every thing by which impurity and licentiousness of thought, imagination, or design, may be awakened in the mind. Avail yourself of the moral seed-time of youth to “sow to the Spirit, that you may of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

Remember “it is rare to see the gray hairs of devotion silver the head which was not *early* taught of heaven;” and that “*early* scholars in religion are the best, for they have less to unlearn.” There is reason to hope that in your case the work of eradicating evil habits and of forming those of holy love and obedience, *if begun now*, would not be like the Ethiopian’s changing his skin and the leopard his spots. If it is necessary to “seek the Lord while he may be found;” how cheering the declaration, “They that seek me *early shall find me.*” And yet the same inspired word forbids postponement to old age. Its promises are limited to a *present* compliance with the terms of salvation.

Keep your mind fixed on your destiny as an heir of immortality. Reflect on the eternal progressiveness of the soul. There will be a point in its existence when it may enjoy or suffer in a degree equal to all human en-

ioyment or suffering in time. How important that now, at its setting out, there be implanted in its deathless nature those principles of thought, feeling and action, which will bear thus to be continued and expanded. Think of pride, hatred, revenge, envy, lust, jealousy, covetousness and similar passions, carried forward into this fearful, this amazing expansion! Think of the power of *conscience* to inflict its stings, when it shall have accumulated strength from this wasteless experience. Think of the indelible impressions of *memory*, from the first moment of its activity to that imaginary point in its course of retention: impressions unnoticed perhaps as they pass, as if written with sympathetic ink, but which will be brought out in full transparency by the light of eternity.

And how terrible the thought, that these eternally legible impressions should be those of impurity and guilt, derived from the written and oral communications, or the pictorial representations and actual scenes of licentiousness! Surely this will be aliment to the worm that dieth not, and fuel to the fire that never shall be quenched. Such impressions may now be made as easily as on wax, but they will endure as if graven in eternal brass. "Keep thyself pure." Guard your immortal mind from every thought and purpose which you would not have retained and reflected for ever. Let your prayer ever be, "Lead me not into temptation." "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me." "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

A wish expressed on the dying-bed of the widow of the late HARLAN PAGE, of New-York, led to the preparation and issuing of the above.