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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN.

CLOSING REMARKS

OF

PROF. J. V. CAMPBELL

TO THE

GRADUATING CLASS

OF THE

LAW DEPARTMENT,

March 21st, 1863.

ANN ARBOR:

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CLOSING REMARKS.

[The following remarks of Professor CAMPBELL, at the close of his series of Law Lectures for the present year, having been unanimously requested by the class for publication, were kindly furnished by him. Being extempore, and prompted solely by the feelings and emotions of the hour, it is the wish of those who heard those words of counsel and farewell to publish them, *verbatim*, as delivered.]

I HAVE now concluded all that I have to offer you on the subjects allotted to me. But I do not feel that I can take leave of those with whose faces I have been familiar so long, and with whom my intercourse has been very pleasant and satisfactory, without some words of parting esteem, and, if you please, of counsel. I do not propose to offer you advice now upon your conduct; for, in common with my associates, I have recognized you always as men of sufficient age to govern your own conduct—of formed character, and standing on the same footing with ourselves.

In performing my duties in this place I have seen and recognized you as associates in the same pursuit of a knowledge of the law, and have sought to aid you in following your studies with the feeling that we were engaged in a common work, and fellow laborers in the same honorable vocation. And as these times of separation come, and those with whom we are united go forth from among us to their own ways, they awake feelings I cannot attempt to express. I am not sure that I can make you comprehend in what way they move us.

But among our thoughts the question will arise, To what end have we been spending this long period in searching out and studying

the principles of the law? You have not come here merely to pass away quietly and pleasantly your leisure time, nor have you labored here only to acquire some useful information. Why then have you given your diligent attention so long and so carefully?

It is because you are to go forth to serve and defend the public, as ministers of the law. Your duty will be to aid in preserving society in peace and order; to protect the weak and helpless against the strong; to enforce to your utmost the rules of right and justice; to redress private wrongs and public wrongs. The community will look to you for counsel and guidance, as interpreters of the law which governs them, and which they may justly expect you will be able to explain. For this reason I shall call your attention to some dangers which ought to be guarded against. You will soon be sworn to obey and defend the laws, and it will be your duty to use all your influence and all your efforts, to preserve society from the terrible evils which must always follow, when it is overthrown or disregarded. If the sentinels fail, what will become of the army?

What is this law?

It is "the golden chain which binds the universe to the throne of God;" which binds together in one common bond all civilized nations, making of one blood all the kingdoms of the earth; which binds together governments, and states, and all communities, and parents and children, by one sacred bond of protection and obedience. By this is bound together all human society, whereby man is raised from the brutal state of a solitary savage, and made to yield that base liberty to obtain the advantages of knowledge and civilization. In entering that higher sphere he gives up to the community all those powers and prerogatives which are needed to make it efficient for all good purposes. It is not his right now to assert and follow his own unbridled will, to enforce by his own act the claims he may think are justly his, or avenge by his own hand his private grievances. But his welfare is entrusted to a stronger power, able by the weight of numbers to protect him far more efficiently, while it compels him, with all its members, to obey what it ordains for the common good.

The power which is held by society to direct and control the conduct of men can never be withdrawn or relinquished. No one can assume to himself any of the functions of the community. If any man attempts to correct evils or redress real or fancied grievances by violence, the law steps in and bids him forbear. It asserts its own

prerogatives; and if he will not yield to its exercise he in a manner outlaws himself, and is justly branded as a criminal.

In times when the public mind is disturbed, it is not very strange that many men who have no settled or conscious evil purpose, may in their excitement lose sight of these principles, and slide almost imperceptibly into serious offences. While we may extend charity to the individual, society cannot extend any indulgence to the crime. And when men, under the influence of their excited passions, resort to force to carry out their resentments, they disturb the only bonds which can hold the community together. The law is indeed very tender to human weakness; but it sternly forbids every man from seeking to remedy any real or imaginary wrong by deadly violence, except in defence of himself or those whom the law itself puts under his protection—unless he does it in obedience to its own imperative commands. And even where such force may be used by the one injured, no one else can in general, lawfully combine with him to exert it; and that which might have been excused when done by a single person, becomes by his combination with others a serious and dangerous crime. I cannot urge you too strongly to use all your exertions to preserve the community from the terrible consequences of such indulgences in lawless violence. The transition from one evil action to another is swift and sure. The first crime leads rapidly to the second, and the second to more and more, until the man who almost unconsciously took his first wrong step is driven down into deadly guilt, from which return is hopeless.

“Hell’s descent is smooth,
But to retrace the steep to upper air,
This, this is toil indeed!”

He who refuses to leave the vindication of his grievances to the lawful authorities, yields to his own lawless impulses, passes easily from assault to conspiracy, and from a conspirator to a rioter. And conspiracy and riot are the budding seeds of treason.

But how is society to be preserved from these evils? Next to the fear of God, there is no other reliance but on a pure and earnest patriotism. It is the best and strongest means of upholding and preserving human institutions in their integrity—the only thing which can save any community from utter ruin. It is a virtue which has been exalted and revered in every nation and in every age, as a

glory and a strong defence—a divine ardor which makes courage invincible.

And what is this noble quality which is so grand in its working, and so excellent? It is not to be found merely in obedience to law. The citizen of the happiest nation on earth, when he stands on the soil of the vilest despotism, owes obedience to its despotic laws so long as he remains within its borders. It is not mere opinion. In a free country men may differ earnestly concerning officers, and measures, and general policy. Their differences may be not only earnest, but bitterly earnest. And yet those very differences may be the result of patriotism in both. No man can deny the patriotism of another because their political views do not agree.

Patriotism is something far higher than any of these things. It is one of those finer elements which can neither be analyzed nor described. It is a holy sentiment which God himself has implanted in our hearts, side by side with those better feelings which preserve and manifest the safety and honor of mankind. It was given us in union with all our best affections, and it is like them in all their blessed influences. It is like the love we bear to father and mother and wife and children—a love intense and abiding. It needs no reasoning or inquiring or urging to rouse it into ardor. It is that which kindles the patriot's heart to such glowing heat, when he hears or thinks of his country's glory, that words fail him to express the depth of his love and devotion. It is such a feeling as inspires the Scotchman at Bannockburn, or the Swiss on his ancient mountain battle fields—that brings a man's blood to his cheek and his heart into his throat, as he hears of the triumphs and honors of his own land. It is the last earthly virtue driven out by wrong; and while this remains, though poor and degraded and debased, the fallen soul may arise again, and win back its ancient dignity. Many a man, sunk in vice or inglorious sloth, has been aroused and renovated by the patriotism that lay slumbering in his heart, and now stands in the pride of his conscious manhood, honored among the honorable defenders of his country. But to him in whom the love of country has utterly died out, what room is left for virtue? No nation has ever, in ancient or modern times, bestowed on such an unhappy being fame or charity. We may weep at the grave of Andre, although he was not only an enemy but a spy, but in no land on earth was Arnold's name ever uttered

without being abhorred and accursed. How well Scott has described the fate of such unhappy wretches, in his beautiful episode on patriotism—

“ Living he forfeits fair renown :
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.”

I have **not alluded** to this subject because I thought that you were wanting **in this spirit** of patriotism. I have had no reason to believe, nor **do I believe**, that there is one among you **who will** ever be found **even approaching** this deplorable abyss. I have only done so to urge **on you** the **prevention** of such evils when **they meet** your attention. **We have had** many young men in this Department who have gone **forth as you are** going forth. Few—very few—have dishonored **themselves or their** country. Some have gained respect in civil life—**many have earned** in honorable service the fame of heroic bravery. Some have **gone up** to heaven in the storm of battle, and **their glory is an immortal** glory.

May **God bless and preserve** you all, gentlemen, in peace and honor.

