

AN ADDRESS TO THE STUDENTS OF
THE CONGREGATIONAL COLLEGE OF
B. N. A.

BY REV. JOHN MORTON, HAMILTON, ONT.

Let me say frankly, gentlemen, that I am not going to speak to you on any theological or philosophical subject, for though I were able I am sure you have got enough of this during the session from your distinguished Principal and Professors. Nor shall I launch out on any question connected with the spirit of the age, for it takes a strong swimmer to keep his head above the water in that ocean. My aim is humbler. I desire to throw out a few hints which may be of use to you in view of the work that lies ahead. I shall begin by congratulating you on the completion of the session, on the health you have enjoyed, on the work you have accomplished, and on the pleasure you have in feeling that your bow is unstrung for a little. I trust that the rest which lies before you will enable you to gather up strength of body and mind, and will bring you back to the next session like strong men to run a race.

Make the best of these months of relaxation, not in entire idleness, not in forgetfulness of your sacred calling, but by nursing your heart in the love of God and man, and entering into deeper sympathy with the work to which you have devoted your lives.

But I have to congratulate you also, and specially, on your connection with the *Christian ministry*. There is no nobler work on earth. It is a work which is dear to the Saviour's heart. It is a work which is to bring comfort to men. It is a work which is to make bad men good and good men better, and to save society from moral corruption. So much does social welfare depend on it that one is almost afraid to contemplate what the world would be apart from the Christian ministry. Be proud, then, of your calling. Seek to catch the spirit of Paul when he said "to me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ."

I have said that it is a work which is dear to the Saviour's heart, and I wish to emphasize the thought, simple, and self-evident though it be. It is true He is in love with all workers. He has pleasure in the farmer going out with his plough to prepare the soil for the grain. He has pleasure in the merchant distributing by car and ship the products of the soil, and bringing food and gladness within the reach of all. He has pleasure in our legislators seeking to secure justice between man and man, and may I not say that He has pleasure in the soldier obeying the call of his country, taking his life in his hand and going to her defence. It is a glorious truth that our Saviour has pleasure in all genuine workers, and the more this

truth is realized by workers of all kinds the more will labour be ennobled and ennobling.

But the thought for you is that our Lord distinguishes between your work and all others and takes special pleasure in it. Imagine the Saviour looking down on a country. He has many desires for it. He desires that the people should be happy and contented, that they should have food and to spare, that they should have the innocent luxuries of life, that they should enjoy the blessings of health, that social order should prevail, and that they should have schools and colleges to educate the rising generation. Christians delight to remember that our Lord takes a personal interest in all these things. But His chief desire is that the people should be holy and happy. This alone will satisfy Him. He sees that this is the radical cure for all the ills of man.

Since then this is the great central desire of the Saviour's heart, since it was for this that He became one of ourselves, and died in our stead, it is clear that must have a special pleasure in the work of the Christian ministry. I have said that this is a work which brings comfort to aching hearts. Having yourselves been comforted of God, it will be yours to carry peace to the troubled, hope to the despairing, and strength to those who have sunk down on the long, long, weary road of life and are not able to rise. It will be yours to take the dying man by the hand and give him courage in view of the dark valley; and it will be yours to bring the light of heaven into the house after it has been desolated by death.

The need for this work will not cease while the world lasts. Let shallow men harp on their secularistic harps, let them proclaim that all this is priestcraft and worse, let them laugh their hollow laugh over the tender words of the pastor at the bedside of the dying, human hearts in their hour of weakness will still thirst for the consolation of Christ.

Preachers have been divided into three classes, lamps, pitchers and trumpets. Lamps pour light into the understanding of men, trumpets rouse the conscience, but the pitchers are probably the most useful of all, because they carry comfort to sorrowing hearts.

But in order to increase your love for the work, I wish to remind you of the relation in which it stands to social order. We often speak of the troublous times in which we live. There are lawless men in all civilized lands, who are ready for any kind of diabolical work. The presence, and the rapid increase of these men, is not to be pooh-poohed as a matter of no importance. They are dangerous to the peace of society *already*, and with the increase of destructive weapons they will become more dangerous as the years roll on. Now, what is to save us from these men? What instrument are we to use to put an end to them? "The gallows" is the answer which