

## A SERMON.

Preached at the Convocation of Bishop's College, Lennoxville, on Wednesday, June 28, 1882, by the REV. ISAAC BROCK, M.A., Rector of Bishop's College School.

"Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of time."  
—Isiah xxxiii 6.

Holy Scripture extols both wisdom and knowledge; it often places them side by side as Divine gifts or endowments.

For example: God filled the inspired architect of the tabernacle with the Spirit of God in wisdom and knowledge. Solomon, at the commencement of his reign, prayed for both wisdom and knowledge, and God gave him both. One great object of the Book of Proverbs is to urge us by a variety of arguments to the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge.

In my text the patriot prophet looks forward to the day when wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of the times of Zion. In the New Testament we read of the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. And in our Divine Lord we are told "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Whether any distinction exist between wisdom and knowledge as Divine attributes, and as endowments of our Lord, in whom they are stored up, not in "a few scanty fragments of faded wealth," but in all their rich and fresh and varied, and many-sided treasures, we need not pause to enquire. As Divine gifts to man, as human endowments, they are certainly not synonymous. There may be wisdom without knowledge, and there may be knowledge without wisdom. Our Laureate sings:—

"Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers."

And an older poet says:—

"Knowledge is proud that he has heard himself;  
Wisdom is humble that he knows no more."

In Holy Scripture, where these two gifts of God are distinguished, which is not always the case, wisdom is placed in the first rank; wisdom is regarded as the nobler endowment of the two. I pause for a moment to define, as far as we may, and only in their relation to man, these two gifts.

Canon Farrar says: "Take knowledge to mean the same total of every magnificent endowment and every extensive acquisition; let it involve not only erudition, but insight; not only information, but intellect; not only theoretical acquaintance, but practical ability; make it include, if you will, the power to think as Plato thought, and to write as Shakespeare wrote, bestow it on one single mind with such brightness as never yet illuminated the world; yet even then knowledge falls far below wisdom, below wisdom merged in obscurity, below wisdom accompanied by ignorance, below wisdom burdened with every earthly calamity, and insulted by every human scorn. . . . For what is wisdom? The world gives the name to many higher and lower manifestations of intellectual brightness and practical sense, but Holy Scripture sees in it nothing save one single law of life."

The great Arabian chieftain said: "Behold! The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

And 1,000 years later than the days of Job, King David said: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning (or root) of wisdom."

In this University no one would desire for a moment to depreciate knowledge. Within these walls, consecrated to the advancement of knowledge in various departments thereof, we would desire to give all emphasis to the counsel of St. Peter when he bids us, giving all diligence, add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge.

Nevertheless, Holy Scripture enthrones Wisdom above knowledge.

Solomon in the earlier, and as the Book of Ecclesiastes shows, in the later years of his reign was rich in both Wisdom and knowledge, and while urging us to the pursuit of both, what does he say of wisdom?

"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."

No marvel then for Solomon to say to the young men of his day, after thus singing the praises of Wisdom;

"Wisdom is the principal thing: therefore get wisdom;  
and with all thy getting get understanding."

Twenty-nine centuries have not robbed these words of Solomon of their living power. Amid the advancing knowledge of our days, they warn us (may we all profit by the warning) that there is something higher, holier, more precious than knowledge—and that is *Wisdom*.

Bacon said—"Knowledge is Power." None, probably, was more keenly conscious of this fact, than the gifted disciple of Gamaliel, St. Paul; and yet what says he of Knowledge apart from Wisdom? "Knowledge puffeth up." Whereas, when knowledge is conjoined with wisdom, he can pray, as in his Epistle to the Church at Colosse, that we may be filled with both.

Wisdom and knowledge then are both excellent endowments, both gifts of God to man, but Wisdom is first. Wisdom is the noblest of the two. Such is the verdict of the Word of God.

Does not history justify this verdict? The history of individuals and the history of Nations?

The history of individuals—

Think of that highly gifted prophet who came from the mountains of the East to curse God's Israel.

"He watched till knowledge came  
Upon his soul like flame,  
Not of these magic fires at random caught;  
But true prophetic light  
Flashed over him high and bright,  
He bore it, and died away, and left his darken'd thought."

Here was knowledge. But where was wisdom? Where that fear of a holy God which is the root of wisdom? Think of a later scene, in the life of that gifted prophet. 'Twas by his counsel that the profligate daughters of Moab were sent into the camp of the chosen people to seduce them from their allegiance to Jehovah. Think of the closing scene of the man who had knowledge enough to pry: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." With whom is he found associated at the last? With the enemies of God's Israel, on whom Jehovah takes signal vengeance. In that day they slew the Kings of Midian, and they slew also Balaam, the son of Beor with the sword. In that sad end, so different from the end desired, behold the peril of knowledge without wisdom.

Pass from fifteenth century before to the twelfth century after Christ. One of the keenest if not the keenest intellect of the middle ages was Michael of France, gigantic were the stores of knowledge he possessed; and yet, as has been severely but truly said—"So flagrant was his folly so fatal his vanity, so gross his crime, that the most miserable could afford to look on him with pity, and almost the meanest with contempt." Another sad proof of the vanity of knowledge—apart from wisdom.

Does not the history of nations tell the same story—emphasize the same warning?

Did, asks Farrar, the lustre of her genius, did the liberality of her institutions, did the glorious roll of her eloquence, did the lyric sweetness of her song save Greece from the infamy of her obliteration, when she perished under the eating cancer of her favourite sin? And if now, any nation failing to profit by the lessons of the past, extols knowledge and loses sight of wisdom; if in its system of education knowledge in its various departments is eagerly pursued, but practical every day piety, that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, is neglected, then rest assured that that nation contains within it the seeds of decay.

But if this be so, if history confirms the accuracy of the Divine verdict, that "wisdom is the principal thing," that knowledge without wisdom is vanity—then some may ask, perhaps, is any knowledge worth seeking after save that knowledge which is wisdom?

It is, because, though knowledge is not wisdom yet knowledge may be, often, the porch leading into the sacred shrine of wisdom.

Knowledge is worth seeking after, because every one who has the mind of Christ, every one therefore crowned with true wisdom, will make know-

ledge a handmaid of Religion. Every Science, from that which dives into the depths of the Universe of stars, to that which seeks to read the record of the rocks, every branch of literature, Hebrew, Greek, Latin and English, French and German; every department of history, ancient and modern, home and foreign—rightly studied, may be made a means of revealing either God Himself, or man's need of God.

Let knowledge dwell in a mind penetrated by that wisdom which consists in a reverential fear of the loving God, who is our Father, and then we are ready to say with Tennyson:—

"Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell;  
That mind and soul according well,  
May make one music as before,  
But vaster."

One grand object of this home of sound learning, both in its senior and junior departments, is to train through God's blessing its students and scholars in both Wisdom and Knowledge. Several of the varied avenues of Knowledge are opened up to the students of this University, and the boys of this Collegiate School, which is designed as a preparation for the University. But this knowledge is ever associated here with religion and practical piety, for, as our Bishop told us four years ago at the Consecration of this enlarged Sanctuary, "The daily worship in this Chapel is the acknowledgement and solemn symbol of the truths which cannot be too indelibly engraven on our minds, that our daily work, to be of any worth, must be penetrated through and through by spiritual influence and religious motive."

By the daily worship of God in this sanctuary—By the silent, but powerful teaching of Christian example—By manifold other influences here at work, is not knowledge ever associated here with that loving reverential fear of God, which is the root of wisdom. May God then, even our own God, so abundantly bless both the teachers and the taught in this College, and in this Collegiate School, in their course here, and in their different avocations in life afterwards, that this home of sound learning may influentially help to make "Wisdom and Knowledge the stability of our times," in this Canada of ours.

## WHY NOT?

It is one of the mysteries why people are not happier. We do not mean happier when afflicted by gout or like pains, or when sickness and want are in the household. We leave out these and other things that take away the ordinary happiness of life. We are supposing families of ordinary health and means; who have enough to eat and wear and wherewithal to make themselves comfortable. Why *such* people are not happier is, as we said, one of the mysteries. And we have fancied that the one great cause of the lack of happiness in such households arises, not so much from determination to be miserable; rather arises from the unchristian use of speech or its selfishness. There is in many families a most unchristian use of speech.—Mothers scold servants and children; husbands and fathers discontented with things around them, give way to such use of the tongue as does not produce the greatest amount of happiness. But the smallest amount of common sense would teach people that they are throwing away all the happiness they might have, and which would be a prodigious comfort to them in this world of trials. No family need fear they will be too happy; and by the judicious use of speech they can prevent misery from entering either their front or back doors.

## DAY OF JUDGMENT RECORD.

It is related of Bishop Latimer that when called up and questioned before his Popish persecutors he was at first not very particular as to what he answered. "But (he says) I soon heard the pens going behind the arras, and found that all I said was taken down, and then I was careful enough of what I uttered." If you can only realize the fact that while you are talking, thinking upon earth, the pen is going in heaven—that every word and thought is registered in the book of remembrance—we should have no more careless, inconsistent talking.—*Matthew Henry*.