

their strength of mind, and their freedom and independence of thought, by speaking disrespectfully of the Bible. And hence the stale calumnies of Hume, of Voltaire, and others of the same school, are often repeated with as much confidence as though they had never been refuted, and with as much complacency as if they constituted the very climax of literary pre-eminence.

This is no place to enter upon an argument on the subject; and if it were, my present limits would not permit. I must be allowed to say, however, that of all the pedants I have ever seen or known, an infidel is the most pitiful and most disgusting. A young man, a mere boy, just entering the field of knowledge, whose views on all subjects are necessarily crude and imperfect, and yet presuming to decide where hoary-headed wisdom has been silent, and to condemn where such men as Locke and Newton have approved, is an object which no man of reflection can contemplate without emotions of pity and indignation. If angels ever weep, it appears to me it must be when they witness an object like this.

Should I happen to be addressing, on the present occasion, any at all given to scepticism, my earnest advice to such would be this—suspend your opinion on the spot; and before you proceed to form another conclusion, or even another thought, unfavourable to Christianity, make yourself master of the subject. Study the Scriptures, their origin, their history, their unity, their harmony, their prophecies, their miracles, their doctrines, their moral precepts, their high and holy purposes, and above all, their wonderful adaptation to the ends proposed. Examine impartially what has been written in their defence, as well as what has been written against them. Consider well the character of their opposers—their morals, their learning, their reputation, their value to mankind, and, above all, their deportment in the hour of death; and with these contrast, in the same respects, the character of those who have been their advocates and adherents. And when you can be sure that you comprehend the whole ground—that you are fully master of the whole subject—if you can be satisfied that the evidence in favour of Christianity is, indeed, unworthy of confidence then reject it—but not till then. Any decision against the Gospel short of this, must be pronounced, and will be pronounced, by every man of candour and discernment, as unreasonable, as inconsistent with the dictates of philosophy and common sense, as it must be perilous and profane.

It should be distinctly understood, however, that the duty now recommended, is not a mere matter of speculation, a mere question of science, which may be settled, or left unsettled without advantage or without peril. On the contrary, it is a question of life and salvation, and upon your decision respecting it, depend the joys or sorrows of the world to come. It is indeed a question, in relation to which, no man can be indifferent or undecided with impunity. It is one, in regard to which all neutrality is clearly out of the question. Not to believe here is to disbelieve; and not to receive is to reject. And to disbelieve and reject, is to set aside the only means of deliverance, and to incur the full weight of Divine indignation and wrath.

If these remarks be correct, and that they are I am sure there is no room for a doubt, then the subject of religion claims your first, your most earnest and solemn attention. If it be true that the soul is of more importance than the body, and that the interests of eternity are of more fearful magnitude than those of time, then whatever relates to these must unquestionably demand the earliest and most active attention. And if it be true, as it undeniably is, that every hour's delay, connected with this point, is necessarily attended with uncertainty and peril, it is easy to see that there is not a moment to be lost. He

who delays or procrastinates here, does it at the enormous hazard of life and immortality. The only safety which the case can admit, is to be found in prompt and decisive action, and in immediate submission to the demands of the Gospel, an unreserved surrender to the King of saints.

May I be indulged while I expatiate on this point a moment longer? I regard the matter as vastly momentous, and am therefore unwilling to pass it over with a single remark. My appeal is to your understandings and your hearts. Who is there in this assembly who does not know, and who will not promptly and freely admit, that there are at least ninety-nine probabilities to one, that of those who are now members of this Institute there are some who will never reach the age of manhood? If this be admitted, then the question must arise, with the most solemn and exciting interest, Who is to form the exception? Of the blooming youth whom I now address, who is he whom death has marked as an early prey, who is even now treading on the confines of the grave, and whose joyous hopes and glowing anticipations are destined to be so soon extinct for ever. This is a question which none can solve but Him who holds the keys of death and the grave. And it is this circumstance, this fearful uncertainty, which brings the inquiry home to every one's door, to every one's heart. No one can throw aside the dreadful liability and say, I am not the person. For aught that men or angels know it may be you—it may be you—it may be you. Here, then, is the consideration, solemn, and impressive, and startling as the grave, which shows the necessity of an immediate and effectual action, for an instantaneous preparation for death, and for all the momentous exigencies which must ensue. And here, too, is the consideration, as religion is allowed to be the only sure preparative for a future state, here is the consideration which demonstrates the necessity of immediate reconciliation to God, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world. As you value your peace in your last hour, therefore, as you value your safety and well-being in a future world, as you appreciate the everlasting friendship of Heaven, and as you deprecate the unending and incomprehensible woes of the finally impenitent, beware how you disregard this momentous lesson of philosophy, of experience, and of common sense.

But, perhaps, you are ready to inquire, "What has all this to do with the matter in hand? what has the Christian religion to do with the prosecution of successful study in the acquirement of a literary education?" I answer, much every way. Religion lies at the foundation of every interest of man, and should accordingly distinguish and influence, and direct his first steps in every pursuit. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," said Infinite Wisdom personified, "and all these things shall be added;" that is, all subordinate interests shall thereby be promoted and secured. So strongly impressed with this principle, that is, the principle of religious influence, have mankind ever been, that, however sunk in barbarism, ignorance, and crime, all important undertakings were habitually commenced by solemn acts of religion, by offerings made the gods with a view of propitiating that power supreme, which their religion told them was indispensable to the success of their undertakings. "Because thou hast asked this thing," said Jehovah to the youthful king of Israel, "and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thy enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like unto thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee." 1 Kings iii. 11, 12. I cannot, I need not enlarge. Those whom I address, I am per-

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