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Dr. Dana's Sermon,

AT THE

EXECUTION

OF

JOSEPH MOUNTAIN.

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EXECUTION

OF

JOSEPH MOUNTAIN

THE INTENT OF CAPITAL PUN-
ISHMENT.

A
DISCOURSE
Delivered in the City of New-Haven,

OCTOBER 20, 1790.

BEING THE DAY OF THE
EXECUTION
OF
JOSEPH MOUNTAIN,
FOR A
RAPE.

BY *JAMES DANA*, D. D.

Pastor of the first church in said city.

NEW-HAVEN;
PRINTED BY T. AND S. GREEN.

THE INTENT OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

DISCOURSE

Delivered in the City of New-Haven

October 20, 1830.

BEING THE DAY OF THE

EXERCUTION

OF JOSEPH MOUNTAIN,

FOR A R A P E.

By JAMES DENNY, D.D.

Pastor of the S.S. Church in this city.

NEW-HAVEN,

Printed by T. and S. GREEN.

The intent of capital punishment.

DEUTERONOMY XIX. 19, 20.

*So shalt thou put the evil away from among you.
And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and
shall henceforth commit no more any such evil a-
mong you.*

MY BRETHREN,

AN occasion so melancholy as the present, viewed in all circumstances, hath rarely, if ever, fallen under our notice. This numerous assembly, of all orders and characters, will attend with reverence to the counsel that may be brought from the word of God. Especially is it to be hoped, that *he*, whose tragical death is to succeed this solemnity, may be all attention to the last sermon he will ever hear. I have ever considered that I preached to mortal men; but was never called to preach to one doomed to death by public justice, and but a few hours before his launching into eternity.

AN important end of capital punishment, as it relates to society and this world, is pointed out in the words read. This comprehends sundry particulars: It is to rid the state of a present nuisance—to prevent the extension of the evil—to reclaim or preserve those who have been, or might be in danger of being, seduced by examples of profligate

profligate wickedness. *So shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall bear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.* A further end of capital punishment will be attended to, as it is a natural consequence from the words. This respects the offender, and a future world. Let us first attend to the former.

WHAT is here said with immediate respect to *perjury* is applicable to other crimes equally pernicious in their tendency. The direction is to civil magistrates and judges, to make diligent enquiry respecting the evil ; and upon proof of it, to put it away by the excision of the criminal. It is a duty which the civil guardians of a community owe to God and their people. They are the ministers of God, by him appointed “revengers to execute wrath upon such as do evil.” They may “not bear the sword in vain.” In being “a terror to evil works,” they are ministers of God for good to the community and its virtuous citizens.

THE excision of a member of society can be justified only for crimes of *magnitude*. It is putting a period, a reproachful and excruciating period, to the probation of a fellow-creature. A just and humane government will recur to it only in cases where the sovereign of life has declared his will, or the public safety clearly requires it. “Among the variety of actions which men are daily liable to commit, it is a melancholy truth,” says judge Blackstone, “that no less than an hundred and sixty have been declared by act of parliament
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to be felonies without benefit of clergy ; or, in other words, to be worthy of instant death. So dreadful a list, instead of diminishing, increases the number of offences. The injured, through compassion, will often forbear to prosecute : Juries, through compassion, will sometimes forget their oaths, and either acquit the guilty, or mitigate the nature of the offence : And judges, through compassion, will respite one half of the convicts, and recommend them to the royal mercy. Among so many chances of escaping, the needy or hardened offender overlooks the multitude that suffer ; he boldly engages in some desperate attempt to relieve his wants, or supply his vices ; and, if unexpectedly the hand of justice overtakes him, he deems himself peculiarly unfortunate, in falling at last a sacrifice to those laws, which long impunity had taught him to contemn."§

SHALL crimes so different in their natures as murder and a trifling theft be subjected to the same penalty ? Policy, justice and humanity alike remonstrate against it. "Death is of dreadful things the most dreadful. This terror should be the last resort of authority, the strongest and most operative of prohibitory sanctions, and placed before the treasure of life, to guard from invasion what cannot be restored." It doth honor to the wisdom as well as lenity of our legislators, that not more than six crimes are capital by our law. *

§ Vol. 4. p. 18, 19.

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* The lenity of government should rather be expressed in *framing* of penal laws, than in suspending or stopping the *execution*. Government is weakened by annexing to crimes such penalties as are too severe to be executed. It is a presumptive evidence of the wisdom and lenity of our penal laws, of the just sense our legislators have of the rights of the subject, and the importance of life, that capital punishments are very rare with us. Institutions, providing for the preservation and employment of public criminals of various description, have been found salutary in many states.

THE execution of a capital sentence should ever be accompanied with circumstances of solemnity expressive of public grief, and adapted to make a lasting impression on all ages, ranks and characters—particularly on children and youth : Such solemnity will greatly subserve the security of the state, and the cause of morality.

VARIOUS crimes were made capital by the jewish constitution, for peculiar reasons which do not apply to other people. Nations are far from being agreed in the number of crimes which should be punished with death. The circumstances of different nations may require them to have recourse to this punishment for different crimes. Nations in general have agreed to make murder, treason, and rape, capital. The divine legislator has expressly interposed his authority with respect to the first. And the reason assigned for the excision of a murderer equally applies to all times and people : It is this : *For in the image of God made he man.* The second, or high treason, is murder increased, and extended to an whole community. The last is the crime for which this malefactor is to suffer death. It is beside the intent of this solemnity to specify all the crimes which the legislature and magistracy of a state may be bound to put away by cutting off the perpetrators. Such we suppose this malefactor's offence to have been. Seldom is *such* an offence so amply proved. For seldom is a delinquent of this description so bold and shameless.

IT is on all hands agreed that a private citizen may defend himself against a violent assault. The
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consequence is plain, that a state may defend her citizens against such assault. When lenity to a criminal would be cruelty to good subjects, on what ground doth he expect lenity? The God of order hath vested civil government with authority to preserve itself—to provide for the personal safety and rights of every subject. He has commanded the civil magistrate to put away any flagrant evil from the state. If this can be done only at the expence of life, then life hath been forfeited to the state. *Ravishment* is such an outrage on humanity, an injury so great and irreparable, a crime so baneful and dangerous to society, that civilized nations have agreed to protect female honor from violence by making death the penalty for this crime.

THERE is a distinction between the forfeiture of *liberty*, and the forfeiture of *life*. But the criminal whose atrocious conduct hath merited imprisonment for life, doth not differ materially in his moral character from one whom all will allow to have merited death. And whether one who hath wholly forfeited liberty can have a claim to life will admit a question. In the instance before us, we proceed on the supposition that it is *unsafe* and *dangerous*, and therefore *unfit*, that such an offender should live. Those who are so depraved in their moral character that they can neither be cured nor endured, are in the civil state what a mortified member is in the natural body. As such member must be amputated for the preservation of the body, so persons of such depravity must be cut off for the preservation of the state. The

master of a family expells from his house the member whose residence in it is no longer consistent with its order and welfare. Should his conduct as a citizen be equally vicious and dangerous, the like power in civil government must be exercised in sentencing him to death—not to *banishment*. If unworthy to live in his own country, he is equally unworthy to live in another. If he hath no rights in his own country, where hath he any rights? And what indignity to another nation, to transport into it such convict?

ONE design of capital punishments then is to rid the state of a present nuisance, and protect good subjects. A further design is to *warn* and *restrain* others of evil dispositions. That *those which remain* may *bear and fear*.

WITH this view the supreme ruler, in his moral government of the world, sometimes evidently sets forth individuals, and sometimes communities, as an *example*—an example of his righteous severity; and an admonition to the ungodly. You will readily call to mind various examples in scripture of the judgments of God, final as to this world—inflicted with the parental design of giving a sensible demonstration of the malignity of vice, preventing the extension of it, and awakening a just awe in the minds of many, who, were it not for such admonitions, would proceed to commit all iniquity with greediness. Divine threatnings as well as judgments recorded in scripture are all parental warnings. The divine government is a pattern to earthly rulers.

SOME may imagine that punishment, especially capital

capital punishment, must be dictated by *revenge*. If only the case of the suffering individual came into consideration, this might appear specious. But government, from the nature of it, regards a public interest : It provides for particular parts or members in subordination and subserviency to the good of the whole. Surely no individual can complain that his interest is not consulted to the injury of any citizen—much less at the peril of the public. He cannot complain, that he, being of an abandoned character, is not spared to spread the contagion of iniquity. If righteousness exalts a nation, and iniquity is its ruin, goodness requires that such as would bring on this ruin be cut off. That must be a very bad administration under which any subject is permitted with impunity to assault his fellow-subjects, or to seduce them from their allegiance. That head of a family doth not consider what he owes to his household, who suffers any member of it to subvert all order, decorum and duty. Nor could we prove the moral rectitude and goodness of God, were he not known in the course of his providence by the judgments he executeth. Punishment is his strange work. He delighteth in mercy. But if this doth not reclaim, he will whet his glittering sword, and his hand will lay hold on judgment. Benevolence itself calls for punishment in this or an after state, or there is no such thing as moral government. In civil society, the wicked would walk on every side, and the cry of the oppressed be in vain, the foundations would be destroyed, confusion and misery would prevail, were punishment, capital punishment, never executed. IN-

INGENUOUS motives are the best. But with how many have such motives little or no influence ? It would be well, could we, in inculcating morality, prevail with all by representing the reasonableness, excellence and advantages of virtue, the turpitude and misery of vice. But we are compelled to persuade men by the terror of future judgment, and future wrath. With this view the scriptures reveal future indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish. Yet even the revelation of the wrath of God from heaven doth not restrain many. They do not believe, or do not fear, him who can destroy soul and body in hell. So in regard to civil government, the *love* of it is the most worthy and sure principle of obedience and submission. But what course must be taken with those who neither fear God, nor regard man ? who are impatient of controul, and break through the restraints of all laws human and divine ? who would dissolve society, and introduce universal anarchy ? If such would be the consequence of suffering them to live, they manifestly ought to die, that so great an evil may be prevented. Such examples of public vengeance naturally strike terror into others, whose lusts and passions might impel them to the same, or as great evil, were it not for this warning.

THERE are but few who are made without fear. So awful and strange a punishment especially, as in a few hours awaits this poor prisoner, is calculated and designed to put the lawless in fear. On this occasion persons of all characters have come together. Possibly there may be some in this great con-

concourse, who have been kept back from the same, or the like excess of riot, by no other consideration than the fear of human laws. To such especially he is now set forth for an example, and will be in a yet more affecting manner in the afternoon. Very few have ever been more hardened and audacious offenders. Yet even he informs us, that when in the midst of his career, one of his associates was tried and condemned, he, with those that remained, heard and feared. Well had it been, if they had taken warning, and committed no more any such evil. But when they found that their companion, who met the just reward of his deeds, made no discovery of his accomplices, their fears vanished, and they returned to their former course. Now another, perhaps the most bold and subtil of all, after having escaped the vigilance of the civil magistrate in several kingdoms of Europe, is this day to be offered a victim to public justice. From the past tenor of divine providence towards such offenders, the probability is, that none of them will die a common death, but that all will share a similar fate with this criminal. If even his heart failed him for fear, lest his iniquity should be brought to light, how doth it now tremble? If this spectacle of human depravity and misery should prove a restraint to others from committing any such evil, it will not be exhibited in vain. They themselves will have reason to acknowledge the divine goodness in giving them this warning—a check will be put to such evil in the state. This example of wrath will praise God. It may be heard of in the kingdoms where the
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prisoner long perpetrated the most flagitious crimes. It may be a means of bringing his confederates in vice to deserved punishment, of detecting a band of villains, combined for the vilest of purposes, and as dangerous to a community as the pestilence that walketh in darkness. It may be a restraint to an horrible practice which hath long prevailed in Europe, and hath begun to prevail in this country.

BUT whether it may be presumed or not, that this day's example may be thus extensively known, and be followed with such salutary consequences ; it is at least adapted to restrain any of a like character who may be witnesses, or hear of it. In this view its design is important to them, and to the community. If such a warning should not be hearkened to, it must argue stupidity and madness in vice, which forebode speedy destruction from God and man. Seldom is there such an example, such a warning, as the present. God grant it may not be an admonition unregarded by such whose degeneracy makes it a needful one to them. What fruit of his past life hath this condemned malefactor ? The end is a premature, shameful and violent death. In full health and strength, in early life, in a moment, on a gibbet, he is to be dispatched into eternity. Compassion itself calls for it--public compassion. I add, compassion also to such as have entred on a vicious course, or may be in danger of being seduced. The prisoner preacheth a better sermon to such than I am able. Look on him, ye who make a mock of sin ; hear, and fear. Behold, ye despisers and wonder.

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See an early wanderer from the path of good education, an early despiser of God and things sacred, one who has had no awe of sin and wrath, one who has sported himself in the spoils of his fellow men, one who hath speedily filled up his measure of iniquity, one of whose untimely end you are to be witnesses this day. Beware how you harden yourselves after his example—stifle the checks of conscience—hate instruction, and despise reproof—how you join yourselves to company who are in the broad road to destruction. Such was the case with him who is now set before you as a warning. He hath been almost in all evil, and is going to appear before the judge of all, to give account of himself. Should he, in this situation, have a seared conscience, what thought more affecting !

THIS reminds us of another end of capital punishment mentioned at the beginning of my discourse. It respects the *offender* and a *future* world, as the former respected society and the present world. This is a consequence from our subject. For crimes which call for such severity of punishment, which render it dangerous to society that the criminal should any longer live on earth, must needs be as *scarlet and crimson*, and call for a repentance deep in proportion. When nothing short of death can expiate his crimes against his fellow-subjects or the state, his punishment is indeed *final* as to *this* world. But in this last extremity his soul is commended to the divine mercy. What hath been ever usual under our happy government, ought to be the usage in all, to allow the

the convict a space of repentance. To hurry him immediately from an earthly bar to the bar of God, (extraordinary cases excepted) seems to argue want of sensibility and compassion. To give him opportunity to consider, and give glory to God before he dies, is the united dictate of humanity, morality, and christianity.

THE situation of a condemned malefactor, confined and chained in a dark prison, an emblem of the shadow of death, the day of his execution fixed, must awaken reflection in one who is not totally abandoned. The providence of God intends it as a moral means of opening the ears to discipline. By this means hath he sealed the instruction of some. The natural horror of death, the additional horror from the expectation of such a peculiar kind of death, conduce to arrest the mind with apprehensions of eternal consequences. Where some weeks are allowed between the sentence of death and the execution of it, there is time for most serious consideration and penitential sorrow. The mind is not thrown into such agitation as precludes sober reflection. In the situation above supposed, the malefactor, whose mind is not exercised with other thoughts than those of temporal death, must indeed be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. The second death, the wrath of an incensed Deity abiding on him, the day of the lamb's wrath, the greater damnation for having neglected a great salvation, raise other apprehensions than temporal destruction. If the near view of the latter may be improved as a means of quickening him in flying from the wrath to come,

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in this case he that dies on a gibbet will have reason to be thankful that his wickedness was discovered, and met a merited punishment from public justice. The expectation of the destruction of the flesh, through the operation of sovereign grace is a means of saving the soul from death, and of hiding a multitude of sins. Such as “ sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron ; because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most HIGH ;” have had their heart brought down—have cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and been brought out of worse darkness than the dungeon of any prison on earth—worse chains than any outward ones have been broken.

THE scriptures mention a thief who found mercy on the cross. But he was a *penitent*, not a *reviler*. There were *two* malefactors on the cross at the same time. One of them railed on the suffering Redeemer, saying, “ Save thyself and us.” The other rebuked his fellow, saying, “ Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation ? And we indeed justly ; for we receive the due reward of our deeds ; but this man hath done nothing amiss.” He proceeded, and “ said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” You see to whom these reviving words were spoken—to one who had indeed been a notorious sinner in his life, was capitally condemned, and brought forth to execution. But he was fully convinced of the enormities of his

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life, the justice of the punishment to which he was doomed, and feared the wrath of God more than that of man. His trial and prison awakened his conscience : He was resigned to his destiny as what he had merited : He administered a most pertinent reproof to his companion in sin, who with an air of levity, and with ridicule on his tongue, was suffering a capital punishment—ridicule pointed at the holy and just ONE, who was then enduring the cross to save mankind, and while he hung on the cross prayed for revilers and murderers, “ Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.” In these circumstances of ignominy, the other malefactor condemned himself, justified God, rebuked the reviler, bore testimony to the innocence of Jesus, confessed him as the Christ of God, and was an earnest, a successful suitor for mercy. Whoever with like penitence and faith applies for mercy, shall find it, though at the last hour of life.

BUT what encouragement doth this instance afford to the unbelieving, unconcerned sinner ? what encouragement to one who laughs at destruction, and dies deriding Christ, instead of expressing humble faith in him ? All manner of sin is forgiven for his sake to the penitent. The grossest sinners have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. They who have *much forgiven* them, are sensible of the obligation, and *love much*. They are found weeping at the feet of Jesus. Or with the prodigal, not while wasting his substance in riot ; but when he came to himself, and resolved, “ I will

will arise, and go to my father, and say, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." Or with the publican, who "would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote on his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner." When great sinners are thus overwhelmed with grief and shame; thus see the purity of God, and abhor themselves; thus look to him whom they have pierced, and are in bitterness of soul, then may they have hope. For Jesus was *sent to heal the broken hearted*. The sacrifices of God are a contrite spirit.

BUT shall we talk wickedly and deceitfully for God? Shall we speak comfortably, while the workers of iniquity boast themselves? while they set themselves against the Lord, and against his anointed? while they think to out-brazen HIS wrath, at whose "presence the mountains quake, and the hills melt, and the world and all therein are burnt? Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish."

THERE is danger, great danger, of misapplying and perverting the grace of the gospel. On the very favourable supposition of true repentance at the close of a profligate life, there will not be the best evidence of the reality of such repentance. Opportunity is not left to manifest the sincerity and bring forth the fruits of it. There cannot then be the comfort and hope which is greatly to be desired. There is not space to efface, by the example of his repentance, the reproach which the delaying and presumptuous sinner hath brought on
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the cause of Christianity and of virtue. There is not time to undo what he hath done against God and his fellow-men.

THESE things we observe on the favourable supposition of true evangelical repentance, after a life spent in vicious indulgence. But such repentance is rare. More generally those who have despised the riches of God's goodness, forbearance and long-suffering till the close of their days, go on still indulging an hard and impenitent heart, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath : Some remarkable providence may, in a few instances, have roused open and flagitious sinners from their security, so that a bad life may have ended well. But though this may be a reason why none should *despair*, who have thus wasted life, is it not as forcible a reason why none should *presume* thus to waste it ? Would you thrust forward the main business of life into the last day and hour of it ? Yea, would you refer to your dying hour, not only the whole business of life, but also the much more difficult business of reforming and renouncing habits of sin and excess ? Is not the natural bitterness of death enough, without the greater bitterness of sin unrepented of, and uncanceled ? Laden with an heavy load of guilt, which, without any additional load of infirmity, would be heavy enough, how will the sinner, on the verge of eternity, support his own reflections !

WHATEVER aspect any of the preceding reflections may have on such as have lived without God in the world, and at the end of their days mourn thus, " How have I hated instruction, and
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my heart despised reproof,"—whatever aspect they may have on the state of the unhappy man here before us ; they are, I am persuaded, the words of truth and soberness. However distressed we may feel for him, we may not, in this last instruction to him, hold up fallacious hopes ; nor give countenance to others, who are warned by this example to *hear and fear*.

YET once more am I called to address you, *Joseph Mountain*. No more will you hear the counsel of God from any of his ministers. The bounds are set which you cannot pass. *The judge, your eternal judge, now standeth before the door*. This day, in about three hours, you must die—must be hanged as a spectacle to the world, a warning to the vicious. Had I not been very sensibly affected—were I not now especially affected, with your situation, I should be ashamed of myself as a man, more as a Christian, and yet more as a Christian minister. It is a weighty argument with us to warn the wicked, that we watch for souls as those that must give account. If warning is not given them, and they die in their iniquity, their blood will be required at the watchman's hand. He is sometimes sent with this most melancholy message, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not ; and see ye indeed, but perceive not." But this desperate message no spiritual watchmen may directly apply to any, unless divinely inspired, and commissioned in an extraordinary manner. Our general encouragement to warn and reprove is this : " If any do err from the truth, and one
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convert him ; let him know that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Great sinners may be reclaimed. With God all things are possible.

SOME sinners, if saved at all, are plucked as *a brand out of the fire*. And this, I am compelled to tell you, is the utmost we can hope concerning you. Had not the levity of your mind, during the first part of your imprisonment, prevented, I should have chosen another text for the present melancholy occasion. Since your confinement you have by no means given the best evidence of true contrition. Your circumstances have called upon you, and Christ's ministers have called upon you, to repent in dust and ashes—to escape for your life, to flee for refuge to Jesus Christ, who saveth from sin, and from the wrath to come. How many and fervent prayers have been offered for you in public and private? We have tried to persuade ourselves that you were a *prisoner of hope*, and have most affectionately warned and intreated you to *turn to the strong hold*. And did I not think it at least possible, that there may yet be mercy in store for you, I should hardly have complied with your request to preach to you this day. Unto you, therefore, I once more call. You are ready to be offered a victim to public justice. Wherefore, in the language of the holy Ghost, "TO DAY, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart."

IF the history of your life, taken from your own mouth, and this day published, may be credited,
you

you have been almost in all evil for sixteen years past ; that is, ever since you were seventeen years old, and left your master's family. You have personally, and in company with others, been guilty of high-way *robbery* in about twenty instances ; of *burglary* once at least ; of *theft* repeatedly ; and for *rape* you are now to be executed. From robbery you have proceeded to *gaming*, *riot* and *debauch*, and from these to robbery. How many have you seduced ? How many have you ruined in their character and estate ? From early youth to thirty three years you have lived in sloth, dissipation, lewdness and violence. You have gone to and fro in the earth, as Satan your master, seeking whom you might devour. You have spent your days in contempt of every duty to God and your fellow-men, and gloried in your shame. You have merited the punishment you are now to suffer more than twenty times. I say this on the supposition that you are such a person as you have now told the world. If your history is false, your depravity is equally manifest. For then, as you go out of the world, you mock at the most presumptuous sins. You boast of *pretended* valor as a villain, in the moment of death. Yea, you die with an act of the deepest injustice to numbers of your fellow-men, whom you now accuse of a confederacy with you, for a number of years, in capital crimes. You still persist to affirm, that the history you have given of your life is true in every particular. You can reap no advantage from deceiving the world in which you are no longer to live. I shall therefore suppose that you have said
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the truth. Your past unprincipled and shameless character, and this only, can explain that apparent indifference to your state, during a great part of your imprisonment, which hath astonished us. Should you wish to leave behind you a character for skill and bravery as a thief or robber, a rioter in the spoils of your fellow-men—Should you now think of thus outbraving the wrath of the most HIGH, the last act of your life would be yet more presumptuous than any or all your *great transgressions*. God forbid that you should harbour a thought of thus filling up the sum of your wickedness—that you should thus with madness in your heart go down to the dead. Your name, crimes and punishment will be remembered, we hope, that others may hear and fear, and commit no such evil. Though young in years, you are old in sin.

WERE a pardon from man this day offered, how would it affect you, while your heart is trembling for fear of the tragical death before you? But it is unsafe for the world that you should live. You have lived a nuisance on earth. You must therefore be executed. There is no reprieve for you. Yet a pardon from God is even now offered you, if you repent; otherwise you must perish in a more deplorable sense than is implied in the strange punishment which awaits you. If destruction from man be a terror, destruction from God is much more. There is a world to come. There is an omniscient, holy and righteous judge. The great Redeemer will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire. Then such as have trampled him under foot, shall be punished with everlasting

ing destruction from his presence. In that day such will be the lively horror of hardned, but then so late awakened sinners, that they will cry to the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and cover them from the face of the Lamb, whose wrath they have inflamed. Is it not now high time for you to “ consider this, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver ? The ungodly shall not stand in judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.” Of what vast moment then is it, that you “ acquaint yourself now with him, and be at peace ?” How have you improved the space since you were tried and condemned at man’s bar, in preparing to stand before the bar of the great judge of the world ? I fear you cannot give a good answer to this question. A few moments are yet left you. *Who can tell but God may have mercy ?* There is plenteous redemption with him. Fall down before him in the deepest contrition of soul. Own the justice of your sentence. In the depths of distress cry to him, “ Lord, save me ; I perish.” Let free and sovereign grace in the Mediator be your plea. I beseech you, be reconciled to God. I beseech you as an ambassador of Christ, and in his stead, who made peace by the blood of his cross ; in whom all fulness dwells ; who hath the words of eternal life ; who hath the keys of hell and of death ; who will come in glory, and call you and all mankind to account ; who will pronounce the final sentence, “ Come ye blessed,” or, “ Depart ye cursed.”—In his stead I beseech you, for the last time, **BE RECONCILED TO GOD.**

My hearers, we have before us one, whose boast it has been, that he was pre-eminent in the skill and valour of an highway-man ; who seem to have accounted this an honorable acquisition and hath blended with it, as the natural consequence, various other, and equally atrocious crimes. The last, for which he is to suffer death, besides its enormity in its own nature, was attended with circumstances which shewed that he had cast off all shame, and even all fear of detection ; that he feared not the eye of the world any more than that of God.

HE began his career of wickedness at or before *seventeen*. This is the most critical and dangerous stage of life. From this circumstance, and this example, I may therefore very pertinently take occasion to caution our *young* people against the follies and temptations to which their inexperience and impetuosity expose them. See in this instance of what moment it is to form early habits of virtue—to hear counsel, and turn at reproof—to shun the paths of vice. Happy the youth who “ walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” Small sins lead to great ones. *The beginning* of a vicious course, as that of *strife*, is like *the letting out water*. Wherefore “ abstain from all appearance of evil.” Resist the first solicitation, as he, “ How can I do this great evil, and sin against God ?” Whenever tempted, allow time for this reflection, “ Thou, Lord, seest me.” “ Can the ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? then may those who have been

been accustomed to do evil, learn to do well." How melancholy a comment on these words doth the present occasion afford? When sinners have assumed the boldness to leap over the boundaries of laws human and divine, they gradually lose all tenderness of conscience, and proceed from evil to evil. What is particularly said of the issue of unlawful pleasure, may be applied to any other vicious course: It is "the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." We therefore beseech those who are yet young, by the sorrowful example they here behold, that they forsake not "the guide of their youth; that they be not wise in their own eyes: Fear the Lord, and depart from evil." The choice they make, the course they enter upon in early youth, is of unspeakable importance, both with respect to this world and another. Would to God that the present warning may not be an unprofitable one! that they may see the necessity and advantage of submitting to salutary restraint, and trust the wisdom of their superiors, instead of doing what seemeth right in their own eyes. When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise.

FURTHER, have any by false accusation, or secret fraud, or extortion, or otherwise, deeply injured their fellow-men? They will do well to ask, whether, in the view of the heart-searching God, they may not be as verily guilty concerning their brother, as those who have injured him more grossly, and are subjected to ignominious punishment from civil government? Do the checks of conscience, or force of human laws, or a sense of public shame, restrain men from such enormities

as the prisoner hath been addicted to ? And should not the all-seeing eye of God restrain from all injustice to men ? yea, from all sin either against God, or man, or ourselves ? Should it not influence to keep the heart with all diligence ? Do men take pains to save appearances ? How much greater reason have they to approve themselves to him who searcheth the reins and hearts ; and will give to every man according to his works ?

MAY all who indulge vicious passions be warned by the event of this day. May the consequences of idleness, gaming and dissipation, of lust and an ungoverned spirit, falsehood and greediness of gain, the temporal and eternal consequences, be well considered. These things impel men into courses destructive of their peace, and of their souls. From small beginnings they increase to more ungodliness. Tho' timid at first, they soon become capable of bold exploits, and prove veterans in vice. But few who enter these paths, return again. The few who do, find it extremely difficult to tread back the wrong steps they have taken. The gains of vice are hard, perilous and momentary. The triumph of its votaries is short. They travel with pain all their days. They know not the way of peace, because they fear not God. Their own counsel casteth them down. "The heaven shall reveal their iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against them. They shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world. The Lord's throne is in heaven. His eyes behold the children of men. He trieth the righteous ; but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest : This shall be the portion of their cup." But *the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.*

