

[Israel Atkinson to his Youngest Son, Brighton: January 9th, 1873.]

My dear Boy,

I take it, that, according to commonly-received opinion and usage, you are considered now to have arrived at that period of life when children go out of parental leading-strings and are no longer subject to parental restraint. That having attained the age of manhood, you now lay aside the tutelage of your natural guardian and assume a man's responsibilities. As this affords an opportunity, and as, while laying down the office of your guardian, I still retain without the slightest abatement the affection of your father, and an equal solicitude for your welfare, I will embrace the opportunity to say a word to you, and I will first of all say that I think it scarcely possible that any father ever brought up a son till the age of twenty-one years who had, in the discharge of his natural duty, less cause for anxiety, suffered less trouble, or experienced less sorrow, than you have given me. While this is a matter of gratitude with me to God, on your account as well as on my own, I think it is right to say as much to you.

In view of the future (if you will allow me to say another tutelary word to you), you may assure yourself that success in life 'such success as when gained can be enjoyed in confidence and with comfort' as it ought not, so it cannot be attained by other means than a persevering industry linked to an unbending integrity and an irreproachable honesty. In the expressive language of the Scripture, it is very certain that "Through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through." So he that is wanting in integrity 'I mean by integrity a thorough soundness of moral principle, bearing the fruit of a sound moral habit in every walk of life' can never be trusted, or only trusted so far as a latent suspicion that he is a disguised rogue will allow. And he that is deficient of honesty can only be dealt with as he is in fact 'a pest in society' a thing to be thrown out or stamped out.

If you will allow me herewith to offer a suggestion or two I will say"

Live within your means. 'Have a surplus and take care of it'. When want overtakes the thriftless a common occurrence he finds but little pity, and that little is more than he deserves; and those who do pity him usually burn his heart with a caustic word when they put the dole of their pity into his miserable hand.

Owe no man anything. "This is a Scripture exhortation, and the wisdom of regarding it is unquestionable". If possible, never allow any man, friend or relation, to bear the character of your creditor. One means of avoiding this miserable condition the Scriptures say, "The borrower is servant (it means SLAVE) to the lender" is to avoid scrupulously all useless expenses. A shilling breaks the neck of a pound, a penny of a shilling; a penny spent uselessly is often the doom of a shilling, and so a shilling of a pound. Debt has ever been regarded as only one degree less evil than a crime; and it is quite within my recollection when in this country debtors were punished as criminals.

Aim to profit by your observation and experience. You have seen a little of life in others, and have experienced a little in your own. Make use of your observation and experience. Turn them to your account. Lay them under tribute. Make a market of them. The authorities of the Trinity House have, I think, published a chart of our coasts on which there are distinctly shown, for the benefit of all who navigate our seas and rivers, the places of danger and channels of safety. Every man should make to himself for his guidance such a chart out of his own observation and experience.

Employ your leisure profitably. Ever have an object, and let it be a worthy one. If you take exercise, let it be for the benefit of your health. If you read, only read such books as may make you a wiser and a better man. If you go into company, let the company be select persons whose society will do you no discredit, and whose conversation may add to your knowledge or afford a wholesome enjoyment. The Book says, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" And the proverb says, "A man is known by his companions." Scrupulously avoid mere

parties of pleasure, for if they may not justly be called idle, luxurious, and vicious, they usually have in them the elements of idleness, luxury, and vice, and therefore of ruin.

Study what is healthful to the body and the mind. 'Eschew everything unnatural relative to both'. As you value a sound mind in a healthy body, steadfastly resist every corrupt inclination, assuring yourself that to yield is to give yourself a wound for which there is no effectual cure is to kindle a self-consuming fire. Almost all the human wrecks you see around you are such through their own indiscretion; and thus, too, are the greater part of premature graves tenanted.

Ever remember that time is short. We are always within a step of eternity. Your precious mother, a few short months after she gave you birth, found "not indeed then for the first time" the need and the preciousness of the Sinner's Friend, at that season to which we usually and rightly, as I think attach an unusual importance and solemnity. I recall whilst writing the scenes of her last moments most vividly. "I can almost feel her hand gradually growing cold in mine over again!" I can almost re-hear her saying to me, on questioning her about Jesus, "What could I do without Him now?" She is gone! gone to heaven; Israel and John I trust are with her. Heffy and Bekky I hope are on the road thither to join her. Oh how my heart yearns over my two boys! O God of my hope and my salvation, extend Thy mercy to my dear To and to my dear Eb!

The above was written yesterday—I could write no more then. God bless you, my dear boy. This is the constant prayer of

Your affectionate Father,

Israel Atkinson.

[ISRAEL ATKINSON, Twenty-seven year's pastor of the baptized Church of Christ at Ebenezer Chapel, Richmond Street, Brighton,..]