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BACCALAUREATE,

The Carpenter of Nazareth,

Delivered to

THE CLASS OF '84,

JUNE 8, 1884,

BY

over and
JOSEPH F. TUTTLE, *1818-1901*

President of Wabash College,

CRAWFORDSVILLE, INDIANA.

REVIEW PRINT,
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DISCOURSE.

“Is not this the carpenter?”—Mark, 6; 3.

The germ of my remarks is found in the word carpenter. It matters little whether we regard the original word as equivalent to our general word mechanic, or the special word, carpenter—a builder of houses. Jesus worked at a very useful but humble occupation. He was a laborer, and this is one important point of contact between Him and mankind.

We often hear the phrase “the curse of labor.” It is derived from the words spoken to Adam by his Maker. He had sinned in doing what God had forbidden, and God said to him “Cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; * * * *
* * * In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the ground.”

“The curse of labor” is found in the condition of the earth which makes it easy to produce thorns and thistles and hard to produce bread;—to which is added the pain of labor necessary to exterminate the weeds and produce food. Some have made light of the “curse of labor” as spoken by God, but the curse is still here. We speak of “the dignity of labor” and we twine garlands about human toil, but man to this day eats bread flavored with sweat, and his muscles grow weary with the toil for food.

There are great differences in the conditions of men. Some seem to eat bread that has caused them little hard work. If this be so, it would only be an exception to a general rule.

Where is the Utopia not subject to the "curse of labor?" Where the people not compelled to eat bread in the sorrow of toil and sweat? Toil is the unavoidable condition of life on earth.

"No man is born into the world whose work is not born with him."

We are like a company in a leaky boat adrift on the sea. We must work the pumps or drown. In all the conditions of human existence on this earth God in nature and in his Word says to man "thou shalt work." There are certain aids to work which God has provided for man. To furnish these is God's part in reaching the desired result. He makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and he sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. He has arranged the causes which regulate the seasons, now producing snow like wool, and then the moisture and warmth which produce first the blade, then the ear and after that the full corn in the ear. He causes the cedars of Lebanon, and the oaks of Bashan, and the fir-trees of Herman to grow great enough to furnish beams for a house, ribs for a ship or boards for a palace.

For this part of the conditions—essential to the results of labor—man is not responsible and God does not require it of him. The Almighty Creator of the world has filled it with the materials out of which man is to produce numberless things for the welfare of the human race. The soils are full of fertility, and the hills of minerals, and the clouds of water, and the sun of light, and the seas of fish and the world itself of all the materials out of which man is to make what he needs. The infinite and divine amplitude of God's arrangements in all these respects must excite wonder and gratitude in every thoughtful mind. It would not be an empty boast but a divine assertion of a great fact if God pointing to our earth should say to man

"it is very good; what more can I do that I have not done?" This is God's part for which he in no wise hold us responsible; and where God's part ends man's part begins. You will keep in mind that I am trying to illustrate the nature and universality of the "curse of labor." I wish to look at this from several points of view. It is said by one of the poets, that "In Nature's Infinite book of secrecy, little we can read."

"It is an infinite book of secrecy," and we learn to read even a little in it with great difficulty. He is said to be the best teacher who compels his pupils to teach themselves. The mother bird drops the food into the mouth of its fledgling, but nature bids a man to find out what he needs and then help himself. She is no mother-bird picking the wild berry and bringing it to him. She forces him to go to the mountain and pick it for himself. Does he need a fish? He must catch it for himself. There may be instinct to help him but it is associated with reason even in regard to the plainest wants of his being. Nature holds shut her "infinite book of secrecy," with strong clasps, and she seems to challenge him to unclasp the volume, and disclose its secrets. To do this man must wrestle against nature with the most patient and wearisome toil. And sometimes she breaks out in furious rebellion against his exactions. He lays his hand on steam, and is rent by it as by a raging wild beast. He beats his way into the laboratory of her secret forces to subjugate into his services agents that can rend the rocks—the "giant powder" of nature—and is torn in pieces by the secret he has found. He discovers how to "make a way for the lightning of thunders" and nature as if in a rage at his insolence makes the fire of Heaven to flame along that way to destroy property and life. And even when the

conquest has been so far won by man that he began to lay the way of that lightning in the bottom of the oceans, that widely separated continents may be brought close together, nature at first victoriously resisted the aggression with terrific storms.

Nature is not the willing slave of man, nor is she his cheerful teacher. Even in the simplest applications of her forces to the use of man, she deals in riddles and "dark saying." Let me suppose that the human family in respect to its knowledge of the methods of making and using *iron* were reduced to an absolute ignorance—that the total knowledge we now have of this essential article was obliterated. All that knowledge must be regained. A man finds a piece of ore, and the thing to be done is, to learn the art of making iron, and applying it, in infinite variety of ways to the uses of mankind. Let us note its relation to "the curse labor."

At the first thought you may expect an easy task, but you will correct your mistake. It will be difficult to exaggerate the toil incident to the search after this "lost art." A vast number of questions are unanswered for a long time, a vast number of experiments fail, and yet the secret is not found. There may be an occasional beam of light struggling with the deep darkness, and now and then such auspicious accidents as have led to the applications of steam, or the discovery of electro-magnetism. Man is the learner, and every effort is attended by the blunders of ignorance. And yet nature is pitiless. He may be baffled and desperate, but nature remains voiceless as the Theban Sphinx. She does not relent. By her silence she seems to say to him, "work out your own salvation." If she would only give one hint, or point her finger, even without a word or a look!—But she will not. There are

the materials out of which iron is to be made, but the infinite toil of learning how to make it is laid on man. He himself must work out the result or it will not be done.

The history of human invention and labor, in this one line, making possible a nail, a knife, a plow, a locomotive, a bridge, a gun, or any one of the ten thousand articles which are made of iron would be more wonderful than any fairy tale. Indeed "this is fairy land" when by this one industry we seek to show how man has learned to read nature's "infinite book of secrecy," as displayed in the arts and sciences which have done so much for mankind.

You will keep in mind my line of thought. I want to make that famous phrase "the curse of labor" unfold its contents of infinite coercive human toil. And you will let me amplify it by another method, which is wider than that just followed.

Both show how this "curse of labor" whether we like it or not, is a necessary part of human condition, laying heavy burdens on every shoulder and bringing pain to every heart.

The line of illustration to be followed is suggested by Solomon, who says "moreover the profit of the earth is for all; the king himself is served by the field."

Our Lord said to the tempter "man shall not live by bread alone" and yet we know that every man must have bread or he must die. And to produce bread is for this reason the most common avocation of mankind, as it is the most important. And it would seem as if nature would here so far depart from her general rule as to teach man directly how to produce and prepare food. But here as in the other great industries nature furnishes the materials and leaves man to find out for himself how to use them. At first he finds the wild fruits, some of which like "the wild gourds" which the sons of the

prophets used for pottage, may be poisonous. From these wild products are to be evolved the delicious fruits, the grape, the fig, the apple or the peach. From the wild and worthless wheat is to be evolved the grain which now "furnishes the principal breadstuff in all civilized communities." From the wild cattle are to be bred the magnificent creatures which now furnish such vast quantities of flesh-food to the best civilized races on the earth.

To effect these changes science had to be studied so as to learn the methods of improving the wild plants into the superior ones which now give seed to the sower and bread to the eater. The science of chemistry must be acquired to analyze both soil and fruits, and other sciences also bearing on animal, but especially on human, life. And experience gradually acquiring facts must prove all things and hold fast that which is good. With incalculable patience and toil men for thousands of years have thus been wringing from nature the secrets which she would not willingly communicate, and the vast result is now represented in that one word, *bread*.

And to convert these breadstuffs into food, fit to be eaten has also been the wonderful supplement of the universal industry just described.

How vast the reach of this industry that employs the best agencies to produce breadstuffs and to convert them into food! Where is she elysium on the whole earth in which hunger is not forcing men to toil for bread and also to discover the secrets of converting the production of the soil into wholesome bread! So true is this that we may adopt as sober sense the lines which were written in a vein of sarcasm:

"We may live without poetry, music and art;
We may live without conscience and live without heart;
We may live without friends, we may live without books,
But civilized man cannot live without cooks."

The arts of raising bread from the ground, and the conversion of it into food have cost an incalculable amount of toil. Scattered every where over the earth are the elements out of which to grow and make food. But like "the four leprous men at the entering in of the gate at Samaria" men have said under the pressure of a tremendous necessity, "why sit we here until we die?". And so through ages of toil they have won victories over nature which are summarized in the single word "*bread!*"

And even this general statement does not adequately express the truth as to the "curse of labor."—In millions of homes this imperious need of bread is yoked in close fellowship with starvation.—Not only do children cry for bread, but millions of men and women are facing "hungry ruin." They occupy the debateable ground which lies between that stunted penury whose daily bread leaves not a surplus crust for to-morrow, and that gaunt want that is sure to follow an accident, a fever, a drought, a flood, or any other common and unavoidable casualty. Who can number the multitudes of human beings who all the time are walking close to the line which separates them from "famished famine!"

It is evident then that start at what point we may, a cottage, or a palace, a work bench or a gold mine, a ditch or a throne, we must follow a path which, if it does not lead to *bread*, will lead to *death*. Poetry may seek to cover this tremendous fact with sweet conceits as the vine does the ugliness of a dead oak, it may sing in stirring figures the joy of toil.

"Joy to the toiler; him that tills
The fields with plenty crowned,
Him with the woodman's ax that thrills
The wilderness profound;
Him that all day doth sweating bend
In the fierce furnace heat;
And her whose cunning fingers tend
Our loom and spindle fleet!"

I say, poetry may in glowing numbers thus

magnify the joy of the toiler, as if this toil were

"A prayer more than the prayer of saint,
A faith no fate can foil."

And yet in the experience of mankind there is pain in toil and man continues to eat bread in sorrow and in the sweat of his face. Even the poet dreams his sweetest dreams, and the humorist utters his merriest conceits under the whip of hunger. The artist realizes his ideals in marble or color or sound, but in all his work is found the omni-present pain of the physical want "cruel as death and hungry as the grave."

It is in this sense, that I have so often used the phrase "the curse of labor." I do not mean to say that honest labor is dishonorable, or that there is not "dignity in labor." Labor has achieved many noble rewards. Eminently is this true of those who work in the higher spheres. The civilized nations have built alters to these workers. They do not readily forget their great workers. The Pantheon of Rome has the monument of Raphael, and Westminster Abbey the monuments of Sir Isaac Newton, James Watts and Dr. Livingston. In fact as Pericles said so well in his orations, over the sepulcher of the Greeks who had fallen in battle, "the whole earth is the sepulcher of famous men—whose memorial is graven not on stone but in the hearts men."

Nevertheless as the condition of their greatness they had to toil as hard as the meanest slaves. They had to toil for bread and to eat that bread in the sweat of their face. As we think of their renown we may forget that being men of like passions with ourselves they could not escape "the curse of labor" but felt its coercion as surely as the most humble worker in the most humble calling in the world. It does not require much knowledge to know that these brilliant cases are few and exceptional.

Here and there a worker looms up from the dead levels of human life like Mount Lincoln among the rocky ranges. The masses of human toilers attain no such eminence and are not capable of it.

My proposition as to the "curse of labor" must then be admitted as touching all that dwell on earth—the high and the low. When our Lord began to speak to men as no man had never spoken, his neighbors were astonished, but not discovering that in the past his true mission was to touch the human family where every human being needs sympathy and help in their human toil and infirmities, they asked contemptuously "*is not this the carpenter?*" They spoke in contempt but uttered a question which is to day penetrating the hearts of mankind. A carpenter! a humble village mechanic! whose business was to build very humble houses for humble people, and on very low wages. He was not a Hiram of Tyre, or an Aholiab building and adorning the palace of kings, and the temples of God. The houses on which the "carpenter of Nazareth" wrought had rude walls of clay or perishable stone, with rough oaken beams overhead to support the flat roof of clay. The doors and windows were rude enough and in these humble homes there was not an iron nail or a pane of glass.

And in such a humble calling Jesus, the son of Mary earned his bread. It seems to me that if the people who heard his words with such amazement had spoken of him as "a great doctor of the law like Gamaliel" or a great prince like David, "or a great Master Builder like Hiram, the son of the Tyrian widow" they would have robbed Christ of one glorious part of the human conditions which makes him the brother of all human toilers for bread—all the uncounted common laborers who in their peculiar experiences know what "the curse of

labor" is as the more favored classes do not. And when *the Christ* moved among men is not merely uttering the words of life, and painting the lost to a practical salvation from the curse of the broken law of God, but characterised as one of the world's "weary and heavy laden" workers for bread to the question "is not this the carpenter?" He has truly showed himself the Christ that mankind need as he did when he died for them on the cross. Some of the great and learned have affected to despise the lowly carpenter of Nazareth and yet before her divine Son's birth Mary had said with holy exultation "God hath put down the mighty from their seats and hath exalted them of low degree." And this is true of more than "the son of Mary" only not in so illustrious a way. The three great discoveries which are now so powerful by affecting the conditions of the world were made one by the son of a "very poor blacksmith, a second by the son of a humble village minister, and a third by a humble fireman at a colliery who could not read when he was eighteen years old, and who was so poor at the age of twenty-four that he could not buy a steerage passage to the United States. Illustrious trio, Farraday Morse, and Stephenson! Of whom one by one in some sense the proud world has asked the question "is not this the carpenter?"

And such cases show how honorable is labor expended in the service of mankind. The reward outweighs the pain—the glory eclipses "the curse of labor" by which it was won. And not only is this true in these higher spheres of work, but in all its spheres even the lowest. Jesus is peculiarly "the Christ" of the common laborer. His work is not the most pleasant. He must dig, or hew, or saw. It tries him and brings but little recreation. The road he travels is not long. It reaches from his humble home to his work. It is hard work

on low wages and plain fare. His are "the horny hands of toil."

And yet this common labor keeps the wheels of the world moving. Let it stop a day or a month and a world wide calamity must follow. The ploughman turns not a furrow. The reaper gathers not a sheaf. The smith's fire goes out and the carpenter's plain is still. The spinne, twists not a thread, and the weaver moves not a shuttle. The engine stands dead on the rail, and all the machinery of the world becomes motionless. In the greatness of such a conceivable calamity we get a glimpse at the grandeur of common labor, and the nobility of those who perform it.

And they also have in the "Nazarene carpenter" not only a Redeemer but a brother who can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities. He has done a most important thing in this making common cause with humanity in its broadest relations of labor and suffering. The very seal on his commission as the brother and the helper of the world's common laborers bears the inscribed words: "Is not this the carpenter?" He labored in as lowly a sphere as any of them, felt the bitterness of toil, ate bread in the sweat of his face, achieved perfect obedience to duty in spheres occupied by lowly and common laborers, and so invested common toil however lowly or hard with a sort of divine dignity, as if God himself were saying to every laborer who does his duty, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord!"

I may seem in thus speaking to confine within too narrow limits the work of Christ. But the greater includes the less. If such be true of Christ's relation to the lowly—the common laborers—it must be true of all labor of whatever grade, whether of the hand or the brain, the plough or the pen, the unskilled or

the skilled. All honest toilers in whatsoever sphere are bound together in one great brotherhood of which. He is the Head of whom it was said—"is not this the carpenter?" So long as this question remains a part of the earthly life of Jesus, the Christ, labor will be honorable, a virtue worthy the practice of every man, and is sure of the approbation of Jesus, who said: "Father I have finished the work thou gavest me to do," and who when on the cross died with these words on his lips "it is finished."

You will not misunderstand me as under estimating our Lord's work as a Savior from sin. It is indeed "a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Well may we glory in the cross on which the world's Redeemer died. God forbid, that I, or you should glory in anything but that cross. We do magnify it. We cling to it. We clasp it to our hearts. Every redeemed soul must say "by the grace of God I am what I am. And so we raise our alleluiahs to the Lamb that was slain!

I am not discrediting Christ as a saviour, but to-day, I want to ask the world's laborers, who eat bread with the pain and sweat of toil, to think that their Christ is not an atheistic philosophy, nor a brutal materialism nor work in sorrow which has no brotherly cords to link man to his brother man, and no hand of the dear Father in heaven let down to take their's with a pressure that shall send courage into their hearts and strength into their muscles. They have a Christ who is one of them and the seal of his fellowship with them is found in the question "is not this the carpenter?"

GENTLEMEN OF THE CLASS OF '84.—I have only a few words to add to the discussion just completed. First of all, in behalf of your teachers. I cordially greet you as you reach a result for which you have been working so

long.

I have been discoursing about "the curse of labor." You will know more of it when you get to your life work.

You have been educating your minds. I trust that this has not been training you not to work or to despise labor. That would be a real calamity to you. I want you to feel "the curse of labor," "this sore travail that God has given to the sons of men." You will not be worth much if you do not feel it. I want you to work in some honest calling so as to get tired. I do not say what the work is to be. You must say that. And I want you to work so hard and so wisely that you shall do something worthy the long and costly preparation you have been making.

I am sure you will despise yourselves, and others will despise you if either you do nothing or if what you do be good for nothing. There is no life of honest labor so humble or so hard that ought not to be preferred to either. There are cases in which educated men apparently "do nothing," or in which what they do is "good for nothing." An absolute and total wreck could alone be worse.

You come on the stage at a time when "the parchment army," composed of men and women who have received academic and professional diplomas has grown to a vast size. Some of the professions are said to be over-crowded, and the supply is constantly enlarging. High Schools, Colleges, Universities, Industrial Schools, Professional Schools, numbering several hundreds, are each year sending out thousands of graduated candidates for the places claimed and sought by educated workers.

"As I did stand my watch upon the hill,
I looked toward Birnam, and anon me thought
The wood began to move,
You may see it coming;
I say a moving grove."

I do not see the wood of Birnam moving but

I do see a vast army of men armed with diplomas moving on to storm society and capture its desirable positions. And I assure you that if you propose to "do nothing," you may as well abandon hope. With such a competing multitude you must make up your mind to work so hard as to realise in your own experience what "the curse of labor" is. You must work in the "ground that is cursed and eat bread in the sweat of your face."

Working that way you will find that "all true work is not only hard but sacred." You will want bread. Then work for it and you shall have it.

I have spoken of the vast numbers of educated young men. There is one comforting fact. I have looked carefully over the names of the twenty-two classes graduated at this college since 1862. They number over three hundred. The list contains some splendid names. They appear in the several "learned professions," and also in the other avocations of life. A few are not living. I find some that I candidly think have not succeeded. A few have become wrecks. But the most have had good success. In looking over the list, name by name, I am impressed with the fact that those who have succeeded believed in hard work and in bread won by sweat. I desire, therefore, to express with emphasis my high estimate of hard, honest work in attaining success. It is the key which unlocks the door that opens to a bright future. I have referred to the graduates who have gone out from this college during the last twenty-two years. Some of the worst failures among them have been in spite of fine natural endowments, and among those who have achieved great success are found some of excellent natural parts, and some not endowed with brilliant talents. The rule which stands out pre-eminently on the face of this catalogue is this:

The men who have failed have tried to evade the "curse of labor;" the men who have succeeded have done so by honest sweat! I predict that you will not be exceptions. Please mark my words.

It is the fear of some good men that a liberal education may breed in the minds of young men an aversion to hard work; and a contempt especially for those who are toiling in the humbler and coarser avocations. Such a result must be deprecated.

The great majority of educated men spring from the loins of common labor. Let them not despise their origin, but rather shed dignity on it by the honor in which they shall hold both the labor and the laborer.

Remember, young men, that Jesus Christ was a common laborer—he was the carpenter. He reaches down his hand to you as you work. Do you reach down your hand to the humblest worker and give him cheer as Christ gives you. And so all the walks of useful toil shall be brighter for your presence and sympathy.

But after all, young men, it is possible to work hard and usefully, and yet the result be "vanity of vanities." The time will come when "your work shall be tried as by fire." Some work, like the "hay and wood and stubble," shall be burned up. Some is indestructible, it will survive death itself and live forever. The broken alabaster box of Mary is still shedding its perfume in our world and it will forever fill the Father's House above. The cup of cold water shall never fail to refresh the soul of Christ Himself, because it was given to one of the least of His brethren. "The work of faith and the labor of love" for the honor of the Lord of glory, and the comfort of those for whom He gave His life shall not perish and they that are wise in doing such work "shall

shine as the brightness of the firmament, even as the stars forever and ever."

Jesus Christ is the only foundation on which you can put up a building that shall endure forever. So build on that foundation that you may adopt the inventory of the Christian's immortal possessions made by St. Paul. "All things are yours, whether * * * the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

Young men of the Class of '84, your *life*, your *work*, is before you.

"A sacred burden is the life ye bear,
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly,
Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly.
Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,
But onward, upward, till the goal ye win."



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