No. 183. C

On the respect due to age.
1 Kings, xii. 8. “But he forsook the counsel of the old men, wh they had given him, & consulted with the young men, thst were grown up with him, & stnd before him.”

This unhappy indication of character is recorded of the rash & foolish young prince, who succeeded Solomon in the government of Israel. Succeeding to the throne of the most illustrious of the Jewish kings, Rehoboam doubtless began his reign with vigor & haste, with the eagerness of youth, flushed with the honors of being at the head of his nation, & surrounded with the means of strength, of power, & of glory. But a sad decline followed, a division of weakness marred his reign. Soon after his accession, a large number of his people with a leader at their head, presented to him a petition, that he would relieve them from the heavy burdens imposed upon them by his predecessor. Whether their complaint of Solomon's reign was just or not, it is diffi...
cult to know. Probably it was merely a pretense used to cover purposes of interest or ambition. At any rate, the manner in which Achabbaam treated their request was haughty, rash, and unfeeling. He first applied for advice to the old men. The men, who had been probably his father's counsellors, told him that he might easily secure the hearts of these discontented people, by kindness, mildness, and gentleness. This sound of good advice he spurned, and applied to the young men, who had grown up with him, who would be more likely to flatter his passions. His counsellors advised him to meet the complaint of the people with contempt, threatening, to beat them down with the insolence of power, to tell them that his little fingers should be thicker than his father's loins. That where his father had chastised them with stripes, he would chastise them with scorpions. He followed this impolitic and inhuman advice. The consequence was, as might be expected, the whole passions were kindled; honor into a flame, the dissentents revolted, the kingdom was divided.
were severed from their allegiance to the foolish young king.

Now the subject suggested to us by this piece of history is the respect that is due to old age. The youthful insolence, with which Jehoash treated the counsel of the old men, even if that counsel were wrong, impolitic, cannot but excite the indignation of every reader of sensibility. The fault of this young prince is, however, but too common. There is an impatience of restraint, an eagerness for immediate gratification, in the character of youth, which is but ill prepared to submit to the calmness and caution of old age. The consequence is, that the young too often look upon the old as people, with whom they can have no sympathy, who disturb their plans, interrupt their joys, and mar their prospects. This state of feeling is apt to result in indifference at first, and then in open secret dislike or contempt. But it is a state of feeling most unfavorable to the formation of an honorable and manly character in the young. For good sentiments or principles can be expected from that youth who has thrown off all respect for the aged. It serves him from many of the ties that would bind him to
honesty, virtue. It takes the reins from some headlong propensities, of flatter, many rash passions. There are three
fire reasons, separate from the considerations of duty, which
should bind the hearts of the young, fast, strong, in both
regard of reverence to those who are taking the last
drearly steps in the march of life. There are good reasons
why they, who are at the outset of life should with kind
ness take hold of the trembling hand of old age too soft,
but its weakness. Should treat with indulgence its in
perceptions of frailties, receive with respectful attention
the dictate of its wisdom... Let us then consider some
of the claims with the aged have upon the respect,
reverence, gratitude of the young.
1. The aged, my young, have a claim upon your respec
tful attention on account of their experience. They have
gone before us in the heat of life; they have known
smooth as its rough places, its windings; its dangers.
They have made their voyage over the same sea, where
we are cast; they have rounded its depths; shoals; have
encountered the same perils, which we must meet; have
been buffeted by stormy winds, as well as been wafted
by gentle, pleasant gales, are familiar with the
rocks of quicksands... What is future to us is past to
them... they know the value of the helps upon which
they have been agitated by the same fears, alarmed by the same apprehensions, comforted by the same consolations, they have drank the cup of disappointment, its bitterness; they have learned how many of the plans, expectations, promises of younger days are but the dreams of those whom the realities of life will awaken to more sober discipline. They have seen how many of these visions, which we have of the future, are like the fantastic mounds of sand on the sea shore, while the next wave that rolls on will wash away; they have learned that the race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong, but that time and chance happen to all; they too, if they be virtuous old men, have learned that there are true and real pleasures in life; that there is no judgment without mercy being found in the midst of it; that though there are always dark clouds in our sky, there is a heavenly light which will tinge them with a golden line. They have found that there is nothing stable but virtue, integrity, purity of heart. That all the arts, plans, stratagem, upon which the crafty and the worldly wise value their selves, are but the spider's web, that he who trusts
to them is continually walking in a slippery path. 1 that nothing after all is truly permanent, it may be, but an honest, 2 good heart before God. 3 Moreover, if they are religious old men, they have a testimony to bear to the worth and excellence of the hope and sanctions of the eye. 4 they have found when everything else has been as the broken reed, this has still been a friend, the same yesterday, today, and forever. 5 they can bear witness that virtue finds here a staff to lean upon when she is wearied and faint with the temptations of the world. 6 they can tell how much sorrow has been relieved, gladness itself made more glad. 7 a pure, holy resolution made more firm by trying, by looking from the house appointed for all the living to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 8 Such is the treasury of experience, which is put into the hands of virtuous old age; it is a storehouse of practical wisdom which nothing but experience can furnish. On this account, if in no other, they have a claim on the respect of the young. The knowledge which they have is a kind of knowledge of which the young are peculiarly destitute, as they peculiarly want. For after all, a large part of that knowledge...
This valuable for practical purposes, is to begin
only by experience. We may learn a great deal from
books or other sources; but there are lessons taught by
long acquaintance with life which nothing else can
teach. The knowledge of youth is crude & theoretical; it
needs the ripening hand of time to make it a
useful & trustworthy guide... We want someone who
can tell us the difference between the imaginary
the real, between what we should suppose would
be best & what has been found in fact to be best.

We want someone who will do for us what the
chart does for the mariner, point out the course,
warn of the dangers, & direct to the haven. It isn't
to the stripling, who girds on his sword for the first
time, tells forth the confident & delated, that
we trust; it is to the veteran soldier, who has seen
the worst, most fearful of service, who has toiled, hit,
on the battle field, & faced danger & death in their
direct forms... So it is not in the inexperience of the	real views of youth, however well informed & ardent,
situations, that we confide; but in the sage & wis-
dom of old age, a wisdom, that has been wrought
out by experience, consolidated by trial, confirmed
by actual application to the realities of life. Because, then, the aged are experienced, we, the young, ought to respect them: we should ever distrust our own opinions when set in opposition to theirs, unless we know of some undue bias that has led to the formation of them, remembering that theirs have been tested by experience, while ours have not. To the view of counsels time has given a venerable sanction, they come to us, like the solemn voice from a distance, with none of the earthy or violent sound of the clamor, the shouts, the laughter of the giddy and thoughtless sound of the young, who have grown up with us. Ask you not, my youth, to have one opinion, thoughts of your own; but I ask you to consider that there are those, whose views are worth more than your own, to whom you can more safely trust. Be assured it is the dictate of wisdom to you, not to imitate the foolish Rehoboam, but take the counsel of the old men, as he did. Despise not the light of Piuge, thought it be a mild, steady, and tranquil light, though it have none of the flavor of bitterness of age. It has conducted many safely through the path of life, brought them in peace thence to the grave. Many of the gay
lights, which now amuse us will be extinguished by the
hand of time, while this will ever shine brighter, as it
leads us on.

2. The aged have a claim upon the respect and attention
of the young, because we have been blessed and enriched
by their labours and exertions. If we consider the subject
for a moment, we shall find that we derive very many
of our means of improvement and happiness from the
efforts of those who have gone before us in life. There is
not an individual in society, whose daily comfort and
enjoyment are not more or less affected by what his pre-
decessors have done. Among these predecessors, no small
influence is generally to be ascribed to those, who yet
live amidst the honours and the feebleness of old age.
The aged are already at the portals of the grave, with
regard to active exertion of influence have, as it were,
withdrawn from life; but it is not so with their
agency, that has not withdrawn, but is moving
operating around us, we are living in the midst of
it, are touched by it on every side... When we look
upon the dotage, decrepitude of age, we are apt to have
no feelings but those of pity, in which there is always
implied something like condescension or superiority. But
we should turn our thoughts from the spectacle of
lifelessness before us... of reflect, not on the present,
but the past... That hand, now trembling with in-
firmity, has perhaps done deeds of the highest import-
ance to the welfare of society;... that mind, so ren-
wandered & flutters, like the dying heights of a lamp,
has given birth to thoughts & views that have delight-
ed & improved others, or formed plans, that have carried
through the world, it may be, at least through a few
years of society, the most happy influences... When
we consider the subject in this light, we cannot but ac-
knowledge, that the generation, which is coming in, owes much
to that which is passing away:... therefore, that the young
are bound to show gratitude & respect to the aged... The
aged, my youngs, have done much for us... This is true with
regard to the community in general, with regard to indi-
vidual cases... We can look to those who are bending under
the weight of years, & find much that we derive most
highly emanating from them... We can look to some, who
have enlarged the bounds of human knowledge, who has
thrown light on the mind of man; who have brought
forth or explained new truths, or confirmed old ones by new
illustrations & arguments... We can look to some, who have...
defended the rights of their country, or counselled for its interests, or who have breathed the orage air times of danger, or who have expended their toil & wisdom in the great work of being useful to their fellow citizens. We can look to those, who have spent their days in works of large benevolence, or whom the time of grey hairs has found still spreading protection & diffusing happiness over all within their reach. We can look to one, who have been constantly giving the weight of their character to the cause of virtue & religion, who have fostered every good principle, & encouraged every good work. Who have been like cities set on a hill, such all eyes were directed, & which could not be hid. And in humbler walks of life, we can, as individuals, look to the aged, as those who have given us many of our enjoyments, to whom we owe many of the means of whatever degree of respectability we may possess. The prosperity, it may be, which supports you, the habiliments which shelter you, the comforts of life which surround you, are perhaps derived from what they toiled for, perhaps, amidst days of anxious care, of painful self-denial, of wearying labours, you are now enjoying in ease & security. Perhaps that
very sickness. A disease which has marked the remainder of their days, is the better fruit of that same existence. It has given you the means of happiness. Many of these good principles, good habits, which have been to us throughout life, a bulwark of defence, an armament of safety, were probably derived from aged friends, who had been before us. And did you know that they could give us nothing better than the inheritance of virtue. If we have the advantages of education, we probably have the aged to thank for it. One generation are the instructors of the next, and each gives its accumulated treasures to those who follow. Thus we are always in debt to the aged, to those who have gone before, & communicate what they gather for our instruction & improvement. If we have any serious sense of the value of religion, we generally owe it in a great degree to our eldest friends, & the venerable from of those, who taught us religion, is blended with the hallowed thought of religion itself. In short, it would be difficult to enumerate all the advantages & enjoyments, for which we are indebted to the agency of these, who are now aged. And on this ground, I exhort, my young, that the aged have a strong claim upon affectionate regard. Think not, while
the blood does warm in your veins, a gay smile upon
you, a health flushes your cheek, vigorous moves your
limbs, think not, in the pride of self-dependence, that
upon one nothing to these, she is bending under the weight
of years and infirmity. You owe them much indeed; it is
by gratitude and affectionate attention only, that you can man-
ifest a sense of the obligation.

3. The aged have a claim upon the respect and kindness of
the young, because their season of life is generally such a
season of debility, as calls for the relief of regard and atten-
tion. When we consider their claims, we have been already
stated, we must acknowledge, that we should owe them
all that gratitude could do, even if they were still in
the enjoyment of all the health and strength of youth.

But when, in addition to the other considerations, we ref-
lect, that old age is often a comfortless period of infir-
mity or disease, we must be insensible indeed not
to acknowledge the claim upon the respect and attention of
the young... There is to be sure, here and there, an instance of
a vigorous old man, who seems to have defied the mar-
ges of time; who is strong even to the borders of the grave.
But usually it is not so... Easement of decay are the com
men attendants of advanced years. The step, wh was once light & bounding, becomes slow & measured, & perhaps tottering. The various senses, wh were once so many Wells of delight, are closed, or so weakened, that they cease any longer to communicate pleasure. The eye receives but faintly the images, wh it once delighted to contemplate, & the ear is no longer regaled with the melody of sounds. The silver cord is broken, the golden bowl is broken, & the wheel at thee sister's turns but slowly round. In the language of Scripture, the grasshopper becomes a burden of desire fails; the keepers of the house tremble, the strong men bow themselves, the trees that look out at the windows are darkened. The nerves are unstring, pain makes its course from one part of the frame to another, & the whole man sinks into a state of apathy & indifference to all the objects, on wh his keenest interest had once been expended. And even that higher species of pleasure, wh is derived from the exertion of mind, in many cases for takes him in his old age, who had once found it his delight. Pleasure falters, memory presents but confused & evanescent pictures, & the light of the soul glimmers but feebly faintly. As this is the saddest spectacle, wh the wasting of age presents. The ruins of the body are but like the fell
ing down of the walls of a frail building, whose bases could not endure; but the ruins of mind are like extinguishing the master spirit who once inhabited the building. The grey hairs of the venerable old man are the blossoms of the grave, if he even now sleeps, as it were, in the outer courts of death. In short, he is the solemn period of life, when the body, having answered the purposes for which it was given, is breaking down to give the spirit freedom to soar to other worlds. Surely then, this time of infirmity, of decay is a time, which particularly demands the soothing respect and attention of the young. If we were to set aside every other consideration, this alone would be enough to impose the duty of what I speak—let the young then strengthen the weak hands of old age, let them soothingly support its sorrows, console its grief, let them bear with all its infirmities without a murmur, let them support all that is bitter, unpleasant in its portion, while it is bending under the weight of years, not suffer it to feel the weight; let them never uncover its imperfections or make merry with its faults, but piteously because whatsoever may seem weak or capricious. This tribute of kindness, deference, regard is one, as the wants, merits, infirmities of age in a friendly demand. He, who withholds it, shows himself
insensible to the same of the best of purest feelings, that ennuye the human heart, to some of the most humanizable principles which oppose the actions of man.

There, thus, my youth, briefly endeavored to impress upon you some of the reasons, why you owe the duty of respect and attention to the aged. Know it is difficult to dwell on this subject, without the appearance of exaggeration. You will say there are those among the aged, whose feelings and habits are such as to forbid respect and affection. It is true, some such there are; a sad truth it is. There are some, to whom the heavy head is not a crown of glory, because it is not found in the way of righteousness. Let the aged weigh this well. Let them consider how much they may degrade themselves, diminish the respect with which they might receive, by bad example, wicked principles, wicked lives. Age of itself has claim to deference; but when that claim is strengthened by virtue, who can resist it? Alas! that it is not more frequently thus strengthened. How painful is the shock, when every pure and consecrated feeling receives, when we see an old man, not only vicious himself, but reaching at a hand, trembling with infirmity, just ready to cumme to its native dust, to help on a young sonne in the
ways of guilt, & then turn the path to destruction. Let those who are advanced in years remember, that a kind word, an act of consideration, will almost inevitably secure the affection and reverence of the young; & let them remember, too, that never were true words written than these: "A tender age is not that," etc. But the young may not forget, that it is a duty as they owe to the aged, whose circumstances can cancel, the duty of comforting them in season of infirmity & respecting their opinions, wishes & feelings. You should not consider them as enemies to your happiness, because they are more selves than yourselves; & if they are aged, they will countenance every innocent pleasure & encourage all virtuous enjoyment in the young. With regard to this subject there has been an excellent rule given: it is this: "they who are young should remember that they may one day be old; & they who are old should remember that they have once been young." On the one part, let there be kindness as a good example; on the other respect, affection & attention. And, let us especially in early life walk in wisdom's ways, that we may not waste days or years in unhonorable or exemplary. Then, "when we die, there will be tears on the cheek of innocence & sighs from the bosom of virtue; & the young will wish to resemble, the aged will lament to lose us." March 1823.
At home, March 16th, 1825—forenoon.
At Brighton, Dec. 4th, 1825—forenoon.
At Duxbury, April 8th, 1827—afternoon.