

**PLAIN WORDS TO
YOUNG MEN,
PP. 1-247**

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Plain Words to Young Men, pp. 1-247 by Augustus Woodbury

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AUGUSTUS WOODBURY

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TO



YOUNG MEN.

By AUGUSTUS WOODBURY.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE substance of this volume consists of a series of Practical Lectures, delivered in the Westminster Church, Providence, R. I., during the winter months of 1857-8. They were intended more particularly for the young men who were connected with the congregation worshipping in that church. I have thought it best, at the solicitation of friends, to give them a wider circulation, by embodying them in the present volume. The young men of Lowell, Mass., will doubtless recognize a portion of these Lectures as delivered in the Leo Street Church, in that city, a few years ago. I trust, also, that I may not appeal in vain to the friendship of the young men of Concord, N. H., who have afforded me many pleasant associations. So, with the hope that these "Plain Words" will be read with favor and profit by those for whom they were written, I send out my little book, to meet with whatever fate it may deserve.

I have also added to the Lectures an Address delivered at North Granville, N. Y., July 29, 1857, on the "Position, Duties and Claims of Woman."

CONTENTS.

	<i>Page.</i>
I. INTRODUCTORY,	5
II. THE YOUNG MAN AT HOME,	25
III. THE YOUNG MAN IN SOCIETY,.....	48
IV. THE YOUNG MAN IN BUSINESS,.....	80
V. CONVERSATION—READING—AMUSEMENTS,..	112
VI. THE YOUNG MAN IN THE STATE,.....	151
VII. THE YOUNG MAN IN THE CHURCH,..	186
VIII. ADDRESS AT NORTH GRANVILLE, N. Y.,.....	221

LECTURES.

I. INTRODUCTORY.

IN introducing a course of Practical Lectures to Young Men, I wish to bear in mind, and to have it borne in mind, that I speak as a friend and counsellor, more than as a preacher. I would address myself as a young man to young men; one who knows their temptations, who has felt the pressure of their needs, and who understands their position. The main purpose which I have in view is, to turn the faculties of youth in the right direction—that they may engage themselves on the side of justice, of right, of liberty, and of religion, and that they may be occupied in the furtherance of all the best and noblest objects of life. The Lectures are designed to be thoroughly practical in their nature, dealing with the subjects proposed in the simplest and plainest way.

The Lecture this evening, as preliminary, will be devoted to the consideration of the Duty which a Young Man owes to himself, in the Use of the Opportunities which he possesses, in our Age and Country, and the Demands which are now made upon him.

Let us consider, briefly, the position of young men at the present day. It is not too much to say, that the present generation of young men occupy a position most important, as being those who are to determine the history of the future. There are great events at hand in the life of mankind, greater than any which the fathers knew. Old ideas are passing away; new ideas are coming on, to affect the whole condition of the human race. They apply themselves to all the various departments of human thought and labor; they enter into every scheme of business and government, and, in their development, affect all ranks of men. For the application of these ideas, the young men are the instruments. The old are gradually yielding their places, and retiring from active life. The young are coming forward to do the work which remains. The young, fresh, vigorous life which they infuse into social forces is needed to give new and stronger power to those forces, and employ them for the welfare of the race. "Old men for counsel," says the proverb, "young men for action!" The sage experience which has tested the various influences and powers of life, and knows what they are all worth, must come to give its counsel. We would not by any means disparage it. It tempers and restrains; it is prudent and cautious. But we need something more. Prudence is not the only virtue, and caution oftentimes loses the advantage. A railroad train furnished only with brakes would make but little progress, though brakes are very necessary

articles. We should never despise the teachings of experience. But there are daily exigences arising, for which experience furnishes no rules, and we have to take counsel of the present rather than of the past, as we do the work we have in hand with all our might, as it demands of us to-day. Young men for action, in the stirring scenes of the present, taking the opportunity as it comes, using it faithfully and righteously, and leaving the result with a wise Providence!

It is evident that no grander opportunities have ever been given to any generation than those which belong to the present time. The general diffusion of intelligence—the application of knowledge to the useful arts—the quickened activity of the human mind, arising from the various influences of easier communication—of freedom from the drudgery of labor—of the accelerated speed of our material progress—and of the continual increase of material good, all have their effect, not only upon the condition but also upon the character. We are obliged to think faster, to feel more fervently, to comprehend more rapidly, as well as to work more swiftly. If we delay; if we hang back at all; if we stop to consider and carefully weigh what we shall do, we are left behind. The world passes by us. We are forced to think at the moment, and act as we think, or we lose our place in the general movement, and are soon forgotten. This is inevitable, as we go forward and take the place of action that belongs to us. The period of youth, therefore, becomes