

# YES! AND NO!



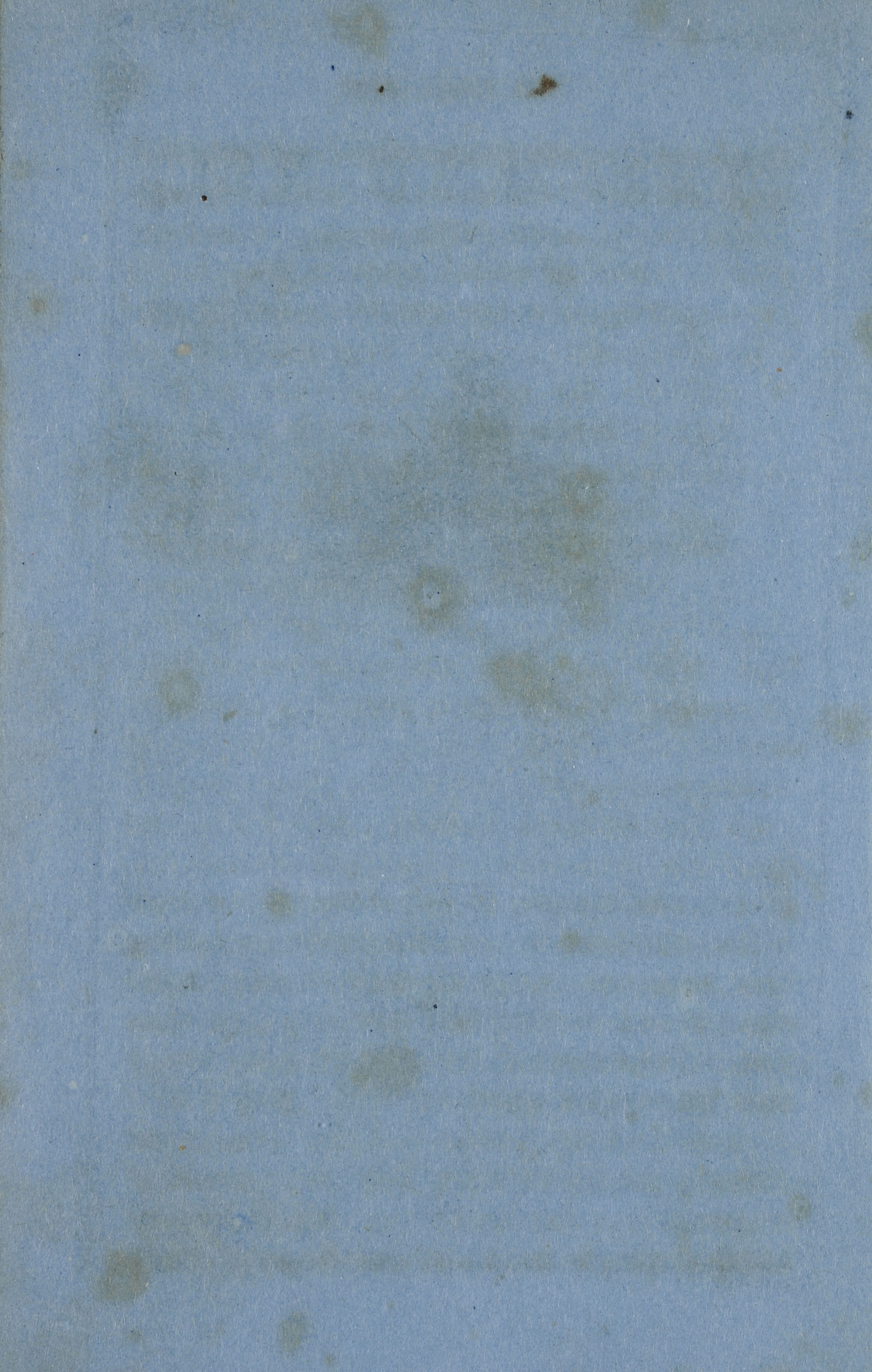
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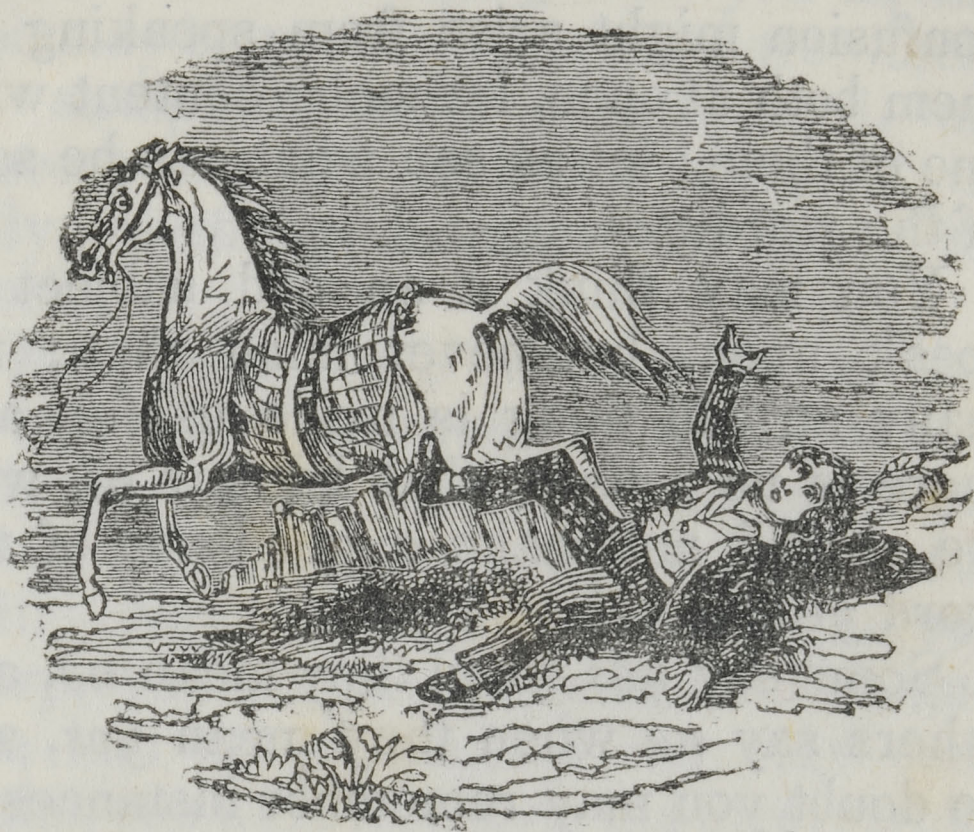
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## YES ! AND NO !

IT is of no use to puzzle young people with hard names of half a dozen syllables, the meaning of which they cannot make out ; it is better to use words which they can all understand ; therefore the title of this little book shall be YES ! and NO !

YES and NO are very little words, but though small in size they are great in importance ; for on the use and abuse of them depends much of our hope and our

fear, our joy and our sorrow. These two words are in constant use ; but as some confusion might arise from speaking of them both at once, let us be content with one of them ; let us see what can be said of the word *yes*.

You may think it an odd subject to speak upon, but never mind that ; for many an odd thing is made useful, and there is no reason, that I know of, why we should not make a good use of the word *yes*.

Some say *yes* when they mean *no*, and others say *no* when they mean *yes*, and no doubt you may remember instances of this kind with regard to yourself. When I was a boy, and the question was asked me if I liked school, I used to say *yes* ; but though my tongue said *yes*, my heart said *no*. Once, when on a visit, I was asked by a gentleman if I would eat a mince pie. Now being uncommonly fond of mince pie, the prospect of having one much pleased me, yet I answered, " No, thank you, sir," foolishly expecting that he would ask me again ; this, however, he never did, and thus was I deservedly punished for my insincerity. Now, in these two instances, I acted, to say the

least of it, a very silly part ; and my reason for acknowledging it to you is, that you may be persuaded to act more wisely. A straightforward, open-hearted, and sincere answer is better than all the silly, shuffling, insincere replies in the world.

But, perhaps, if I were to tell you twenty other instances wherein I acted a silly part with regard to the word *yes*, you might not apply one of them to yourself. Nay, for aught I know to the contrary, you might conclude that because you had not committed the very same faults, you were free from the errors which I had pointed out to you. I will, therefore, soon leave off talking about myself, that I may, for a few minutes, talk about you, and especially about the manner in which you ought to use the word *yes*.

It matters but little whether you are a boy or a girl ; for boys and girls have hearts in their bosoms made of the very same materials, and liable to the same temptations.

There's not a pulse that throbs, that does not still  
Obey at times some base, unbridled will ;  
And not a beating bosom but requires  
A heavenly hand to quench its lawless fires.

He who has been a child knows pretty well what enters into a child's heart ; and therefore, you must not be surprised if I should happen to know what is in yours.

You know, too, that he who stands on the top of a mountain can see further



than he who walks about in the valley below. As I am older than you are, and have seen more than you have seen, so I may be likened to one on the top of a mountain, and may then describe to you a few things of which you are at present ignorant.

In every bosom there is a strong prin-

ciple of selfishness, which continually prompts us to follow out our own pleasures and desires, without caring much whether or not they dishonor God, or trespass on those around us ; and unless this principle is restrained by divine grace, we are continually dissatisfied, running after glittering bubbles, which, the moment we touch them, burst and disappear. If I ask you whether you feel this principle in your heart, I think you will be compelled to reply *yes*. You may love your parents, your relations, and your teachers ; but do you not love yourself better ? You know you do, and therefore must answer *yes*. You obey those who have the care of you, or who are placed in authority over you, but would not you, if you could, rather obey your own heart ? If you speak truly, you will again say *yes*. Now, my object is to point out to you, that whatever this selfish principle may say, whatever your heart may say, and whatever may be said by the whole world, it is to your real interest and happiness never to say *yes* to what God forbids, and always to say *yes* to what he commands.

We are told to love our parents, our

neighbors, our friends, and our enemies,  
and especially to love God.

Whene'er we think upon the skies,  
Or read God's holy word,  
This question in our hearts should rise,  
"Say, lovest thou the Lord?"

And O more happy shalt thou be  
Than language can express,  
If, when the question's put to thee,  
Thy heart shall answer *yes*!

Now, do not be angry if I question you rather closely. Were you ever tempted to deceive your parents by hiding your faults from them? by behaving better before them than when they were absent? by telling them that which was not true? or by rebelling against their authority? If you have done any of these things, did you thereby make yourself more happy? You will not answer *yes*. Did you ever take what belonged to another, acting the part of a thief? If you have on any occasion been so wicked, did the thing stolen add to your happiness? You must not answer *yes*. Did you ever utter bad language, bear false witness against your playmates, backbite and slander those who had offended you? If so, did you get any addition to your peace? You cannot



answer *yes*. Did you ever give way to hatred, anger, malice, and revenge, against those whom you considered to be your enemies? and did it add to your joy? You would be ashamed to answer *yes*. Did you ever break the sabbath, mock at holy things, or make game of those who profess to be followers of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? If these things were ever committed, did they lighten your heart, or render you more satisfied with yourself? You dare not answer *yes*. In all these instances you well know that you have been your own enemy, and that instead of gaining an advantage, you have sunk in your own estimation.

Though sin in its course may a season succeed,  
The heart that does evil must sorrow and bleed.

But can you recall to mind any one instance during the whole course of your life, wherein you have done good or resisted evil, wherein you have humbly obeyed God's holy will, lovingly assisted your young friends, or forgiven your enemies, without feeling a peace greater than you before enjoyed? I do not think that you are bold enough to answer *yes*.

The thing then appears plain, that by

always saying *yes* when God asks you to obey him, and by never saying *yes* when your heart requires you to disobey him, you will secure much joy and avoid much sorrow.

More than one half the misery of the world is brought about by our saying *yes*, either with our tongues, our hearts, or our actions, to evil temptations. And more than one half of our mercies are enjoyed by our being divinely enabled to say *yes* to all the merciful injunctions and invitations of our heavenly Father.

What would you say to a silly companion who in plain language should speak thus to you: "Come along with me, and let us get some of those bright red berries growing on yonder bushes. It is true we may tear our clothes, scratch our fingers and faces with thorns, and tumble into the bed of nettles at the bottom of the ditch; and, after all, most likely the berries will make us very sick, for they are poison; yet never mind, come with me, and let us do as I have said." Why you would tell him at once that you would not go; you would not say *yes* to his invitation. Now all who invite you to do wrong, ask you to act the same foolish part, though they may



only speak of the shining berries, and say not one word about the thorns, the nettles, and the poison. Treat them, then, in the same manner as you would treat your silly companion: be not so silly as to say *yes*.

You may, perhaps, think me very anxious about this matter, but I cannot help being so; therefore I say again, if even those whom you believe to be the best friends that you have in the world, require you to do what you believe to be evil, they are asking you to be miserable: turn away, therefore, from their invitation. But if they require you to do that which

you know to be good, they are asking you to be happy, and with all your heart, your soul, and your strength, you may safely answer *yes*.

And now, having said so much about the word *yes*, let us for a few minutes consider the word *no*.

There are many young people who would hardly believe me if I were to tell them that it is a hard matter to say *no*; and yet for all that, it is one of the most difficult things in the world. Hundreds and thousands who are now unhappy, who are enduring the miseries of want, pain, disgrace, and the stings of an accusing conscience, might have possessed a bright eye and a light heart—might have gone rejoicing through the world, instead of being bowed down with calamity, if in their youth they had learned to say *no*. It is a most important lesson, and well will it repay the trouble of attaining it.

In peace through the pathways of life would you go,  
Hold the reins of your passions, and learn to say *no*.

I grant you that in some cases it is an easy thing to say *no*. If you require many young people to do that which is disagreeable, or to give up something which

gives them pleasure ; if you ask them to share their plum-cake with their companions, to bear patiently the rebuke of their teachers, or to forgive a playmate who has offended them, the word *no* will pop out of their mouths as suddenly and as sharp as a paper wad out of a pop-gun. In these cases there is no difficulty ; but it is not to such cases as these that I allude, when I say that it is one of the hardest things in the world to say *no*. I will give you a few examples.

Joe Turner was a lively and good-tempered lad, but with all his liveliness and good temper he had not learned to say *no*, a neglect which he will have cause to regret to his dying day. A gentleman's servant, who lived in the neighborhood, was in the habit of airing his master's horses by galloping them a mile or two along the common every morning. One day when he was riding a horse, and holding another by the halter, he met Joe, and asked him if he would have a ride. Joe was not accustomed to horses ; it therefore was a very foolish thing for him to get on the back of a mettlesome, high-bred hunter ; but as he could not say *no*, he mounted the horse, and away

he went, starting off directly on a gallop, not being able to keep his horse in. Three minutes had not passed before Joe was thrown; his leg was broken in two places, and well it was for him that his neck was not broken too. Ever since then Joe has been obliged to walk with a stick, and he has no other prospect than that of limping to his grave.

Harry Parker was a playmate of Joe Turner's, but he could no more say *no* than Turner could, and this circumstance caused his ruin. On the whole, he was a decent lad, having many good points about him, and every one said when he was put apprentice to Mr. Roberts, the first grocer of a neighboring town, that he was on the high road to make his fortune. Harry soon got acquainted with some wild and extravagant young fellows, who persuaded him to do as they did. If Harry could have flatly said *no* when they asked him to act wickedly, he would have been safe, but this he could not do. He robbed his master's till to enable him to imitate his companions, and was sent to prison, losing his liberty and his character at the same time.

John Locket was the first scholar in

the Sunday school, and so far as book knowledge went, he knew more than most of his companions ; but, though he learned much that bade fair to be a blessing to him, he never could learn to say *no* in a season of temptation. This failing first made him a sabbath breaker, afterward a rogue and vagabond, and, lastly, occasioned his transportation to Botany Bay ; thus, for the want of learning to say *no*, Joe Turner lost the proper use of his limbs, and Harry Parker and John Locket lost their friends, their character, and their liberty.

O it is indeed a hard thing to say *no* when all around are wanting you to say *yes* ! and yet until you can do this, you cannot act with proper firmness, nor are you in a fit state to be trusted by others. If I had twenty sons and twenty daughters, though it would be a pleasant thing to have them all well educated, one of the very first lessons that I should wish them to learn would be to say *no*.

Did you ever see a purple-faced, bloated drunkard, staggering through the streets, dirty, ragged, and miserable ; a disgrace to himself, and the jest of the thoughtless lads who were assembled around to

laugh at him ? What was it, think you, that made him so loathsome a being ? It was all brought about by his not being able to say *no*. If he had resisted the temptation of the glass ; if, when enticed by his intemperate comrades, he could resolutely have said *no*, he would never have become a drunkard.

Did you ever see a thief dragged off to a prison ? or a murderer led to the gallows ? If so, I ask you again, whether you can guess what it was that occasioned his ruin ? If you cannot, I will tell you. It was by his neglecting in the days of his youth to learn to say *no*. Had he stoutly and resolutely, looking to God for grace, resisted evil, had he with a firm voice and a determined heart said *no* to the temptations of his youth, he had never been led captive, the willing slave of sin, in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity.

Do you not think, then, if these things are true, that it is worth while to learn to say *no* ? Most assuredly it is, and never ought you to be satisfied till the lesson has been thoroughly learned.

When a mouse, tempted by the smell of a bit of cheese, is caught in a trap ; when a fish seizes the worm fastened on a



fish-hook ; when a bird, lured by a few crumbs of bread, alights on a twig covered over with bird-lime on purpose to catch him ; when these creatures thus run into trouble, and deprive themselves of their lives or their liberty, they do it in ignorance. There is no one to tell the poor bird that if he sets his foot on the twig he will be caught ; to inform the poor fish that a hook is beneath the worm that will be fixed in his jaws ; or to make known to the poor mouse that the moment he puts his head into the trap to touch the cheese, he will be strangled to death : but with you it is different ; you are told beforehand that every evil deed will be sure to be followed with its punishment ; therefore you have no excuse.

When lightnings flash along the sky  
Be sure the thunder-clap is nigh :  
Be certain too, each sinful deed  
Will make the guilty bosom bleed.

On too many instances in my past life can I look back with bitter regret wherein I did not say *no* ; firmly, resolutely, unalterably *no* ; for then should I have spared myself many a useless sigh and unavailing tear. If you wish well to all around you, and would willingly keep trouble from

your own heart, again I say, do learn to say *no*. Do not hesitate, or consider, or say *no* faintly, but if you feel that there would be sin in your not saying *no*, say it at once; say it boldly, and say it unshrinkingly. Sometimes temptations appear in a more harmless form than at others; but a wolf in sheep's clothing is a wolf still, and perhaps the more dangerous on account of his disguise; therefore, if your dearest friend, or your worst enemy, asks you to do what you believe to be wrong, say *no* in a manner that will convince him that you mean what you say. Do this in your youth, your manhood, and your age, and you will never repent it. The lesson is hard, because our hearts are sinful. Pray for the pardon of your sins for Christ's sake: he died to save the lost, and those who believe on him shall be saved, and made strong by his strength. Seek the influences of God the Holy Spirit to cleanse and guide your heart.

He who has learned to say *no* in seasons of temptation, cannot be ignorant; he who has not learned it, cannot be wise.



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