

The Young Man and His Problem.

BY REV. JAMES L. GORDON.

"Prone to Remark."

There are certain safe lines in conversation. As a rule no man or woman fails to appreciate a true compliment. It is, also, always safe to repeat to your friend some fairly flattering remark which you had the privilege of hearing your neighbor use with reference to him. A mother never objects to listening to a kind remark concerning her daughter. A father is always pleased to know that your eye is open to the progress being made by his boy in business or in study. Why not follow the safe line in conversation? "It is said that Catherine of Russia joined the coalition against Frederick the Great in the Seven Years' War because of a cutting sarcasm upon her by the Prussian monarch, which travelled from Potsdam to St. Petersburg."

Just Where You Are?

Do not remain where you are if you can better yourself. Study the four points of the compass of opportunity. Examine the North; review the South; read about the West; be thoroughly posted with reference to the East. Move if you can better yourself. But if you cannot move—then better yourself without moving. The best way to get a larger position than you now occupy is to be just a little larger than your present position. Do your best and then believe that a kind providence will take care of your destiny. Canon Farrar once said:—"During the last thirty-six years God has twelve times changed my home, and fifteen times changed my work. I have scarcely done what I myself would have chosen. The support of my life is to know that I am doing what God wishes, and not what I wish myself."

Master Your Moods.

The first battle in the life of a young man is with himself. He does not understand himself. And he is conscious that the world does not understand him. This is the era of emotional conflicts. The tidal waves of passion, hope, fear, desire, anticipation and wonder, sweep over his soul. His feelings play havoc with his heart. Just at this point a young man should lean on the invisible and begin the exercise of a strong will power. For all that Garrick expressed in his face, a young man has in his soul. J. Brierley in the British Weekly says:—"There is a passage in Diderot where he speaks of a marvellous performance by Garrick: He saw Garrick pass his head between two folding doors, and in the space of a few seconds his face went successively from mad joy to moderate joy, from this to tranquillity, and from tranquillity to surprise, from surprise to astonishment, from astonishment to gloom, from gloom to utter dejection, from dejection to fear, from fear to horror, from horror to despair; and then reascend from this lowest degree to the point whence he had started."

Fear of Fear.

Fear is the great enemy of the race. Fear is caution grown old. Fear means a life preserver on every seat as well as under every berth. Fear means a danger signal large enough to impede the progress of the train. Fear, chronic fear, can be seen in the nervous shrinking of childhood and in the chronic caution of old age. The Youth's Companion, an American periodical remarks:—"A Frenchman has been finding names for almost every kind of fear that human beings can have. He ends his list, quite appropriately, with 'phobias'—fear of fear." And to this quotation we add the words of Mathew Arnold, who says:—"Depression and low spirits when yielded to become a species of death." There is more than a grain of truth in the Oriental proverb, "The plague killed five thousand people; fifty thousand died of fear."

A First Class Fool.

An inexperienced gambler is a first-class fool just as surely as an experienced gambler is a first-class knave. Because one is a scoundrel, the other must be a fool. No man ever beat the devil at his own game. The young gambler's luck will never match the old gambler's skill. Of all the fools of modern society, the most colossal fool is the young man who is looking for his fortune in the pool room or the "bucket shop." An expert in observation remarks:—"The dice which are exhumed at Pompeii are 'loaded' so that certain numbers must turn up more frequently than others, just as is the case to-day with the dice to be found as confiscated property in any police museum of New York, Chicago or San Francisco. On the streets of our

own city a big business is done in papers professing to give "tips" upon the races, pointing out the horses "most likely to win." And yet some people will remember that when the English Derby was run last summer no horse that was "selected by experts" won a single prize."

Do It—Drop It.

Cultivate the faculty of execution. Get into the way of doing things. Do the thing just once and drop it. An ounce of preparation is worth a pound of retrospection. Do your very best on your present proposition and when you are through with it turn deliberately to the next item on the programme. Don't let your imagination play with you. Do not permit your mind to generate shadows. Keep a clear atmosphere in your soul. Sunshine in your heart will keep bright the pathway of life. An American religious leader remarks:—"I have long cherished a testimony of Henry Ward Beecher, that he had been able to live to a vigorous old age by doing his work only once. Most people, he said, do it three times: once in anticipation, once in realization and once in retrospection."

Titles.

To have a degree conferred upon you by a great university is an honor indeed, but it usually comes to one at the end of life's pilgrimage, when it is more of a pleasure than a help. A "Rev." or an "M.D." may be useful in order to indicate a man's calling or profession, but God pity the preacher or doctor who depends on diplomas or degrees. The man of true worth and splendid achievement is prone to be careless with references, prefixes and appendages:—"Mr. Willard, of Harvard, Mass., the village where William Emerson first preached, said that when my father came to lecture there many years ago the Curator of the Lyceum rose in the desk and said: 'I have the pleasure as well as the honor of introducing to you this evening the Reverend'—'Oh, we can do without the 'Reverend,' Mr.—," said Mr. Emerson, looking up from his papers, loud enough to be heard by many of the audience, who were much amused."

A Clean Life.

In a new community where men are living in tents and shacks and churches and missions are scarce "sharpness" may rate high on the street and behind the counter, but in settled society nothing commands such attention and consideration as a sterling character expressed in a clean life. In the long run nothing so commands the hearty endorsement and approval of humanity as a life which is clean, earnest, sincere, upright and industrious. Bishop Quayle says:—"Genius gives license for lust. With Cromwell it was not so. He was pure. His life was clean. Henry VIII was a libertine; Charles I, a liar; Charles II, a second Domitian for lascivious revels. Cromwell, in striking antithesis, was true to home. He honored his mother. He loved his wife. Their relations were the tenderest. He loved his children. His son, slain in battle, was never absent from his father's loving thought. His daughter dying, the great heart of the soldier broke. About the man was a noble dignity."

Be True.

Be true to your friend. Be true to him in the hour of his adversity. Be true to him when his friends are leaving him. Be true to him when he is beginning to go down hill. Be true to him when he has blundered and fallen. Be true to him when the doors of society are closed to him. Be true to him when his God is the only one who has not forsaken him. This is true friendship. J. M. Buckley, the great religious editor remarks:—"Dr. Cuyler had a peculiar form of courage. He was a friend of Theodore Tilton from the latter's youth, but was saddened by his defection from the gospel and his erratic reforms, some of which he considered deforms. In the Beecher case, when Tilton was the plaintiff, the latter became extremely unpopular. On a certain Sunday Dr. Cuyler descended from the pulpit and the people as usual shook hands with him. Tilton had come in that morning to hear his old friend preach. As he was going out, looking askance at Dr. Cuyler, the latter stretched out his hand and said: 'How do you do, Theodore?' One of Dr. Cuyler's friends was incensed and said to Dr. Cuyler: 'The hand that shakes the hand of Theodore Tilton cannot shake mine.' Said the Doctor: 'I am very sorry, but it would be too large a price to pay for one hand-shake to give the control of one's hand to another.'"

Record! Record!

Pilate wrote his own death sentence when he penned the words:—"What I have written, I have written." Every day we are making a record which can never be erased or blotted out but the stain of the past is there. Your rubber and penknife blade leaves a poor surface for new inscriptions. So be careful what you say, what you write, what you do, what you think—for you are making a record. E. Hubbard remarks:—"However, John Morley is now a member of the Cabinet. Gladstone is dead. In January, 1891, when it was known that Bradlaugh was dying, a resolution was introduced and passed by the House of Commons, expunging from the records all references to Bradlaugh having been expelled or debarred from his seat. Gladstone the chief figure in the expulsion and debarment, favored the resolution. When the dying man was told this he said, 'Give them my greetings—I am grateful. I have forgiven it all, and would have forgotten it, save for this.' Here he paused, and was silent. After some moments, he opened his eyes, half smiled, and motioning to Labouchere to come close, whispered: 'But Labby, the past cannot be wiped out by a resolution of Parliament. The moving finger writes, and having writ, moves on, nor all your tears shall blot a line of it.'"

Dangerous Thinking.

"As dangerous as a thought" will be one of the accepted expressions of the twentieth century. For men are more and more beginning to realize the power of a thought. Think a thought persistently and it will come to surface. Men will find it in your face, see it in your eye, hear it in your voice, and recognize it in your gesture. Thought is like a certain brand of soap—"It floats." It always finds the surface. For good or for evil, for weal or for woe, ideas are the only things which upon "quos Ackworth says:—"But if ideas will not help us, there is nothing under God's sun that can. This world has been lifted to what it is by ideas. As Emerson says again, 'They only who build on ideas build for eternity.' As we read in that recent sensational novel, 'When it was Dark,' 'the decisive events of the world take place in the intellect.' The only things that count are ideas. 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so he is.'"

Your Handicap?

Were it not for your body you could fly. Gravitation and your body conspire to keep you near the earth. Destiny provides every man with a due trials to impede and no troubles to annoy, become measure of ballast. Successful men who have no "head" and self-willed. Nothing is so sure to ruin the average man as continued prosperity and unbroken success. The author of "Life's Working Creed" says:—"One person has an unsatisfactory wife or husband, or an indolent, dishonorable partner; another has an unscrupulous competitor in trade, or is working short time; another has a sickly wife, or has missed his chance in life because his father neglected him; this man lost his wife when his family most needed her, the other has a foreman who is a brute, or has to worship in the same sanctuary with the man who sold him some rotten shares. Many of us in these times are highly strung, and life drives savagely into the raw."

Preacher in the Pew.

"Put yourself in his place."—is a proverb which has a world of wisdom in it. There are two points of view. Your view point and your neighbor's view point. If you are right in your opinion your conviction will be strengthened by the simple process of testing your thought by the thought of your neighbors. To compare and contrast is the work of the true scholar and philosopher. Be broad enough to confer and big enough to consult. Ask your neighbor what he "thinks" about it. Somebody has said about Henry Ward Beecher:—"One Sunday evening when his pulpit was occupied by some other pastor he was seen sitting in the gallery. When asked why he was up there, he replied 'that he wanted to see how the preacher looked from that point of view.'"

Too Late.

Men think, repent and act when it is too late. The young spendthrift begins to economize after he has spent a fortune. The sensualist begins to "diet" after he has wasted his physical substance in riotous living. The stable keeper locks the barn door after the horse has been stolen. The society queen begins to be concerned about her reputation after her fair garments have been stained. We are all wise and brave and strong after the event:—"When Charles Bronte was dying he was too proud to call in a physician and too proud to even lie down, thus he died standing." Just so. Contemptible in life but great in death.

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