

RELIGIOUS DEPARTMENT

THE POWER OF PERSONAL CONTACT

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It is just possible that as the experiences of life grow larger the tendency to retrospection also increases. It is possible, too, that the more thoughtful survey makes us more keenly sensitive as to the use which we have made of the opportunities presented and to closely scan that which at an earlier stage might have been readily passed. College life with its wealth of golden privilege, both of character development and of helping others, is no exception to this process of sifting, and, as we look back, we oftentimes find ourselves wishing "we had done some things that were not done, and had left undone some things that were done." And in our best moments the thought brings with it the shadow of an inexpressible sadness—
For, of all sad words of tongue or pen—
The saddest are these: "It might have been."

To anyone who thoughtfully reviews College days it must be evident that there are forces and influences at work which militate against the full realization, as well as the largest possible use, of this "power of personal contact." In these days of keen competition if a man desires to take a respectable standing he must devote his energies mainly to his work, and this devotion begets a self-absorption detrimental, to say the least, to his best use of the personal power. Only the most earnest attention and diligent cultivation will enable him to make the best of his opportunities in this respect. Then, as we know, the very atmosphere of College life is charged with that cosmopolitan, perhaps we might almost say, even Bohemian, spirit, which is the glory of its oldest traditions and which the student feels must be perpetuated at any cost. But the very essence of that spirit is that every man is a law unto himself, scarcely even acknowledging any outside allegiance, so that in being true to what he con-

ceives to be the traditions of his class, he must of necessity, to a greater or lesser degree, lose sight of his personal attitude towards others. Especially must the man who is trying to order his life aright be on his guard against these and other influences. So long as he is in the outside world he is more apt to feel his responsibility and be careful concerning his influence, but in the College world every one seems to stand so much on the same plane and the sense of responsibility becomes so small that he is constantly tempted to forget the fact, as Trumbull puts it, "that a Christian soldier is always on duty."

The power of the personal contact is shown in an attitude of thoughtfulness towards those occupying what might be called a subordinate relationship. Those who are ministering to our comfort or helping us in any way. Principal Moule of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, says on this point—"I remember a conversation a few years ago with one of our College servants, an excellent Christian woman, truly exemplary in every duty. She was speaking of one of my dear student friends now laboring for the Lord in a distant and difficult mission field, and giving him—after his departure from us—a tribute of most disinterested praise: 'Ah, sir, he was a consistent gentleman!' And then she instanced some of my friend's consistencies; and I observed that they all reduced themselves to one word—Considerateness. He was always taking trouble and always saving trouble. He was always finding out how a little thought for others can save them much needless labor. The things in question were not heroic. . . . But they meant a very great deal for the hard-worked caretaker and they were to her a means of quite distinct 'edification,' upbuilding in the assurance that Christ and the Gospel are indeed practical realities." And men