

The Young Man and His Problem

A GENTLEMAN

St. Paul describes a gentleman when he thus exhorts:—"Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things." Dr. Barlow says of the gentleman, "He should labor and study to be a leader unto virtue and a notable promoter thereof, directing and inciting men thereto by his exemplary conversation, encouraging them to his countenance and authority, rewarding the goodness of meaner people by his bounty and favor."

PERMANENCE

Men usually prize possessions which have in them the quality of permanence. Gold does not corrode therefore it has unusual value; truth, beauty and goodness are imperishable, therefore they are universally prized. When Paul attempted to name the choicest gifts he selected those which never pass away, which abide. These were the gifts of faith, hope and love. Similarly when Jesus undertook to name the blessed ones he selected those who had enduring qualities—the humble, the penitent, the meek, the searchers, the merciful, the pure, the peacemaking and the self-sacrificing. It is not worth while for a man to live for anything less than the highest. The things that are really worth pursuit can be carried by a person into the next world. They are part of himself. One loses in human quality when he puts real estate above righteousness; dollars above devotion; social stand above self development. George Herbert never wrote anything more worthy than those lines he penned when a young man—

"Only a sweet and virtuous soul
Like seasoned timber never gives;
But though the whole world turns to coal
Then chiefly lives."

SOCIALISM.

In the story of the early Christians it is said that "They lived together and had all things in common." This was the beginning of socialism, and no one could object to it for its essence was voluntarism. It was a great mistake when people attempted to build it upon any other principle. A compulsory socialism cannot endure. In other words legislation without good-will behind it is bound to be ineffective. It is always possible to develop good-will in people by education of the right kind. The right kind of education has chief regard to moral growth.

So if any young man has good moral principle and honest conviction he need not worry unduly about his lack of scholarship. If he has good-will he will accomplish something for society. He will be a true socialist. And of such there cannot be too many. "We can only reach this richer and even beautiful life of co-operation and brotherhood through the deepening and broadening of our own social instincts. This better life is the expression of a better thought. The sentiment must go before the action. And since both sentiment and action are distinctly individual possessions it is in the human heart and the human body that society must be redeemed. The work of social realization must be carried on by a two-fold process, by the socializing and humanizing and perfecting of one's own individual life, and by an untiring effort to foster the social instincts in others—in one's relatives, one's friends, one's acquaintances, one's home community, one's country."

OPPORTUNITY

A man goes through life only once. The journey can never be repeated. If there is anything to be seen or done there must be no dawdling. The fellow who is alert and watchful may be expected to win out. The old Roman maxim says, "Opportunity is bald-headed behind," meaning that if she passes by it is impossible for us to seize her. Just think what opportunities there are for young men in Western Canada—not only in business, but in political, religious and social life. It is nothing less than shameful for any young man to fail in his opportunity to leave an impress on the life of his community.

It was a simple school boy who made this resolution, "I shall never permit an opportunity to pass by of doing a kind action: I shall make political and social righteousness in my adopted country my personal concern. I shall make all I can so that I may do all the good I can."

DEBT

There is no torture much greater than that endured by a conscientious man who finds himself in debt. It was Horace Greeley who said, "For my own part I would rather be a convict in a state prison, a slave in a rice swamp, than to pass through life under the harrow of debt. Let no man misjudge himself unfortunate or poor, so long as he has the full use of his limbs and faculties, and is substantially free from debt. Hunger, cold, hard work, rags, contempt, suspicion, unjust reproach are disagreeable, but debt is infinitely worse than them all. And if it had pleased God to spare either or all my sons to be the support of my declining years, the lesson which I should most earnestly seek to impress upon them is, 'Never run into debt.' If you have but half a crown and can get no more for a week buy a peck of corn, parch it and live on it, rather than owe a shilling. I speak of real debt—that which involves risk or sacrifice on one side, obligation and dependence on the other—and say, from all such let every youth humbly pray God to preserve him evermore."

UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE

All lead a life of unconscious influence. Our very faces and countenances are but reflections of our true character, and are silent but constant influences. It is generally our unconscious influence that has the greatest effect upon others. A man may talk virtuously but if he live an impure life his unconscious influence for evil will destroy the effect of his words. The influence of character is the heaviest weight in the scale of life. A good life will preach when no word is uttered and will stimulate good in others when silently pursuing its own purposes.

A pure-minded and right-acting young man is the greatest force for good in a community. He is always preaching by his attitude, his chance remarks, his practices. This is particularly true if he is a leader in athletics. The captain of a base-ball team has more power in a community than the preacher or the teacher. He has therefore the greater opportunity and the greater responsibility. Nor can any young man avoid his responsibility by simply shirking it. Unconsciously everyone is preaching and teaching.

FEAR

"That which makes people unhappy, which keeps many young people from getting married is not poverty, but fear of poverty." So said a wise man. People can be very poor and yet very happy, they can be very wealthy and yet poor. The only man who is really wealthy is he who has treasures locked up in his own soul. This must have been what he meant when he wrote

"Some have too much yet still they crave
I little have, yet seek no more,—
They are but poor, tho' much they have,
And I am rich with little store.
They poor, I rich; they beg, I give,
They lack, I lend; they pine, I live."

SPORT

One of the easiest ways to tell a man's character is to examine his attitude to sport. If he advocates and practices honesty, fairness, good-feeling and if he takes his knocks and defeats in good spirit we call him a gentleman; if his thoughts of play are associated with gambling, drinking, and looseness of all kind he is a mere thing—not a true sport at all. The young men of Western Canada by engaging in healthy clean sport do much for themselves and their country; if they encourage the objectionable they are doing the greatest possible wrong. Sport should help a man's body and his mind, and it should develop the strongest and most lovable friendships. If it leaves bitterness behind it had better be done away with. I am anxious that this Western country shall continue to produce not only the best crops but the best men. To that end let there be clean sport. It is good to see men around the bulletin board waiting to hear the latest returns from the games: It is better to see them on a corner lot enjoying a game themselves. Let every man get into the game as a preparation for the noble serious game of life.

GETTING INTO SOCIETY

Originally the world consisted of one couple. They represented in themselves the aristocracy and the common people, the wealthy and the poor, capital and labor. As their descendants grew and multiplied they divided into races, classes, creeds. Then there arose conflicts accompanied by ill will and bitterness. Some of the more highly-favored individuals and nations held themselves aloof from the others. Thus there were Greeks and Barbarians, Jews and Gentiles, the upper ten and the vulgar throng, the king who rules by divine right and the poor slave who has no human rights at all.—And yet, they can all trace their origin to that first couple, and this very fact should promote humility and kindness. That it does not do so is well illustrated in a young Scotchman's description of good society. "A man first calls himself a white man, and shuts himself away from three-fourths of the race. Then he calls himself a Briton and reduces his inch of associates. Next he becomes a Scotchman and enters the company of the select few. A further division gives us the clan Campbell, and then the subdivision the Covenanters. And so on goes the division until a man finds himself turning round as it were on a pivot—all alone. And this he calls—walking in good society."



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