

# The Young Man and His Problem

By JAMES L. GORDON

**INSPIRATION.** Follow the line of your inspiration, what you must do, do what you cannot help doing, yield to this the whole strength of your personality. If by force of circumstances you are shut out from the work which you love with your whole heart, wait! wait and think, wait and consider wait and plan, wait and prepare. If you are correct in your own estimate of your gifts and talents the pathway of achievements will open up. This world is too hungry for new voices and new ideas that the man of gifts should wait forever unrecognized. So follow the bent of your nature. Said Arnold of Rugby the great writer and teacher: "I have a testimony to deliver, *I must write or die.*"

**MONEY AND HAPPINESS.** Emerson suggests that the poor man is the man who wishes to be rich. If men only knew the secret, happiness might be reduced to a science and be brought within the reach of every reasonable mortal. Happiness is usually pivoted on three things (1) good health, (2) a moderate income, reasonably sure and (3) a few spare hours every day to be devoted to some favorite study or occupation. The moderately happy people are the folks who have found these three elements entering naturally into their lives. I say moderately happy people, for great happiness is the lot of but few mortals. There is a world of wisdom in the words of the Connecticut farmer: "When I came here to settle, about forty years ago, I told my wife I wanted to be rich. She said she did not want to be rich; all she wanted was enough to be comfortable. I went to work and cleared up my land; I've worked hard ever since, and got rich—as rich as I want to be. Most of my children have settled about me, and they have all got farms—and my wife ain't comfortable yet."

**A PERFECT MEMORY SYSTEM.** A perfect system of memory is wrapped up in that word "attention." You remember the poetry you like, you remember the faces you love, you remember the places which have charmed you, you remember the books which have inspired you, you remember the sermons which have helped you. When your whole nature is aroused and quickened your mental photograph of an incident or event is clear, distinct and accurate. The man who knows how to arouse himself to passing events will in the end develop a strong memory. Here is a fact from "The Life of the Hon. Sir Charles Murray, K.C.B.," by the Rt. Hon. Sir H. Maxwell, F.R.S. "One fine afternoon, after a rainy morning, Mr. B. strolled into the bar of the City Hotel in New York, and, after taking his glass, handed his umbrella to the barman, asking him to take care of it for a few hours. In the course of the afternoon Mr. B. received the offer of a lucrative appointment in Cuba which he accepted. The vessel was on the point of sailing and Mr. B. had to start at once. It was twelve years before he returned to New York, when strolling into the City bar one morning, the barman after looking steadily at him for a minute said, 'How do you do, Mr. B.? Here's your umbrella!' and handed it to him across the counter."

**DOUBTING YOURSELF.** If you are superfine in your nature you will be correspondingly quick in your mental evolutions. Up today and down tomorrow. Your mood ever changing according to the changing circumstances of your environment. The sensitive man has one great battle to fight and it is a battle within the region of his own soul. Some foul fiend is ever whispering in the ear of the soul "you can't do this," "you can't do that" — "you will fail" — "you will fail" says the voice of the Evil one. Unless you can conquer the voice of Doubt you will never win in the battle of life. Charles Kingsley fought this great battle and conquered: — "Whenever," he said, "I walk along the choir to the pulpit I wish myself dead; and whenever I walk back I wish myself more dead."

**LOOK AHEAD.** Look ahead! Not with an over-anxious mental concern with reference to the future but with a clear determination to meet every possible emergency which the future may develop. Suppose the crop fails, or the bank goes into the hands of a receiver, or the factory is swept away by a sudden conflagration, or the senior member of the firm drops into the grave, or war changes the aspect of commercial affairs, or a financial depression sweeps over the country. Are you ready? Could you stand a sudden reverse? Are you resourceful? What is your power of reserve? In case of an emergency what would you do next? — Remember "the unexpected always happens."

The Swiss tradition of William Tell is now said to be without historic foundation, but it makes a good story all the same. Gessler, the Steward of the Duke of Austria, perpetrated atrocious cruelties on the in-

habitants of the Forest Cantons in his master's name. He put the Ducal hat of Austria on a pole in the market place of Altdorf, and threatened with merciless punishment any one who passed it without uncovering. William Tell failed to do reverence to the hat, and was sentenced to be put to death unless he could hit an apple placed on his son's head. He did it. "What," asked Gessler, "would you have done with the second arrow in your bow?" "Shot you if I had killed my child."

**DO IT AND DROP IT.** You must have an exceedingly stout frame if you can carry the burdens of three worlds — the past, the present and the future. There is something of importance to be done so you worry about it before you attempt it, and you fret over it while you are in the process of execution, and you are in the valley of despair over it after the book has been written, its paragraphs printed, its pages sewed and its leaves bound together in the gilt edged volume. More men are being broken by that particular brand of worry—the three-ply brand—than by any other form of mental mischief. Somebody addressed a question to Henry Clay Trumbull of the Sunday School Times concerning a book which he had written: —

"How many copies of the book have been sold, Doctor?"

"Oh, I don't know," replied Trumbull. "When I finished the writing of that book my work on it was done. I'm more interested now in the one I'm writing now."

**SENATOR BEVERIDGE'S BOOK.**

In the last ten years I have read one thousand books of biography and every book for young men on which I have been able to lay my hands. Books on "Success," "How to Get On in the World," "Carving a Character," "The Making of a Man," etc., etc., etc. I believe in "Success" books and have devoured them by the score. Recently I have read a book which has pleased me greatly. I think it is the best book of this present decade for a young man. It is brim full of common sense, business sense and horse sense. It is a modern up-to-date book on the science of success. May I quote the following from it: —

"I am greatly troubled," said to me the general superintendent of one of the most extensive railroad systems in the world as we rode from Des Moines, Iowa, to Chicago. "I am greatly troubled," said he, "to find an assistant superintendent. There are now under me seven young engineers, every man a graduate of a college; four of them with uncommon ability, and all of them relatives of men heavily interested in this network of railroads. But not one of them will do. Three nights ago all of them happened to meet in Chicago. While there all of them went out to have what they called 'a good time' together — drinking, etc."

"That, in itself, is enough to blacklist every man for the position of my assistant and my successor. This road will not entrust its operating management to a man who wilfully makes himself less than his best every day and every night. Besides this, each of them has some defect. One is brilliant, but not steady; another is steady, but not resourceful—not inventive—and so forth and so on. We are looking all over the United States for the young man who has the ability, character, health and habits which my assistant must have."

**ENDURANCE.** When the great crisis in a man's life arrives the question of his future is very often settled not so much by his mental force as by his strength of will. It is not a question of brilliancy, but endurance, grit, courage, backbone and tenacity are the qualities which count. It is not a question how far you can see, but how long you can hold on. Can you endure? What strength have you in yourself. How much "punishment" can you take on the field of battle and still hold your ground. Paul had this idea shining clear in his brain when he exclaimed "be ye steadfast, *unmoveable.*"

**SELF CONTROL.** Endurance is closely allied with self control. Self control is the science of having yourself well in hand, with every nerve and muscle and faculty responsive to the command and behest of the Mind and Will. I cut the following paragraph from the page of a volume which I have been reading recently. It is rich in suggestiveness and as rare an illustration of directness and persistent determination as I have ever found. "It is related as a remarkable instance of self-control on the part of De Leon, a distinguished Spanish poet of the sixteenth century, who lay for years in the dungeons of the Inquisition without light or society, because of his having translated a part of the Scriptures into his

native tongue, that, on being liberated and restored to his professorship, an immense crowd attended his first lecture, expecting some account of his long imprisonment; but De Leon was too wise and too gentle to indulge in recrimination. He merely resumed the lecture which, five years before, had been so sadly interrupted, with the accustomed formula "*Heri dicebamus,*" and went directly into his subject."

**MANNER AND STYLE.** "Have some style about you" said the merchant to his clerk. Style? What's that? — You ought to know.

It wins friends, it makes customers, it increases a man's value to society, it opens the door into the realm of highest opportunity and makes possible some of the grandest achievements of life. A famous English writer in speaking of a popular preacher remarks: — "That man says the same things that we ordinary fellows say, but he serves them up better. He has a good *cuisine*. Everything is cooked to a turn, and the dishes are placed hot on the table. The table is daintily arranged. There is fine nappy snowy white; there are flowers in the centre, and there are some nice bits of silver. If you sit down at such a table, the appearance of everything tempts the appetite, whereas if you have the same food badly cooked, badly served, and on an ill-arranged table, even if you have an appetite, the appearance of the things would blunt its edge."

**LORD BYRON.** The most devoted admirers of Lord Byron were compelled to admit that

he was a strange mixture of dust and deity. He seemed to touch both heaven and hell in the sweep of his personality. Angel and devil seemed to fight hard for the mastery. A member of the British aristocracy, a cultured woman who admired the great poet, said "there are two Lord Byrons, one I like, the other I detest. Charles H. Spurgeon in the story of his own life relates the following: Before I left Cambridge, to come to London, I went one day into the library of Trinity College, and there I noticed a very fine statue of Lord Byron. The librarian said to me, 'Stand here, sir.' I did as I was directed, and as I looked at it I said, 'what a fine intellectual countenance! What a grand genius he was!' 'Come here,' said the librarian, 'and look at the other side of the statue.' I said, 'Oh! what a demon! There stands the man who could defy the Deity.' He seemed to have such a scowl and such a dreadful leer on his face, as Milton would have painted upon Satan when he said, 'better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.' I turned away, and asked the librarian, 'do you think the artist designed this?' 'Yes,' he said, 'he wished to picture the two characters,—the great, the grand, the almost-superhuman genius that Byron possessed, and yet the enormous mass of sin that was in his soul.' If Lord Byron had learned to master himself, if he had learned the lesson of self-control, what years of peace and glory of fame might have been his."

**RUSH AND NOISE.** I sat in a man's office the other day. He thought he was an exceedingly busy man. Every ounce of nerve

force in his brain and body seemed to be leaping toward the surface. He moved from the desk to the safe and from the safe to the desk like a cyclone turning a corner. He commanded his clerks and stenographers like an excited general ordering a new advance in a moment of crisis on the field of battle. He sat in a revolving chair and turned four-square toward the four winds of heaven about once in every three minutes. Busy? Yes—Exceedingly busy! And yet I have known men who could accomplish four times the amount of work with one half of the expenditure of nerve force — quiet, steady, sure and accurate. In reading the biography of that splendid character and successful editor Charles A. Dana I found the following suggestive sentence: "It is the testimony of those who had an opportunity to know, that no office of any kind was ever more quiet, happy, harmonious and well-governed than was the *Sun* office under Dana. Every man in it fell unconsciously under the sway of his chief's personality, and from the first regarded himself as the respected and trusted servant of a master whose eye for what was praiseworthy was never shut, and whose quick and generous impulse was to recognize and reward merit and ability wherever he found them."

**HOW TO SAY IT.** You can say anything you please if you know the science of conversation. It's not what you say but the way you say

it. There is not a rebuke which cannot be uttered if you select the proper place and time and words. Tact is the name of the superfine piece of velvet used at the point of contact. The man of tact knows how to express himself with a tender regard for the feelings of other people. Speaking concerning the relationship existing between the famous actor Sothern and Miss Keene, a writer says: "They were constantly at variance, yet they were always friends during their association. She welcomed any recognition Sothern might win nightly from the audiences; and he, with his disposition, would brook no misunderstanding between them that might last any length of time. He would placidly regard her momentary ill-humor, and in some unexpected way would force a smile from her. On one such occasion, when a storm was brewing, he called out, 'wait a bit, Laura!' and with his dreary hop, he crossed the room and turned down the gas. 'Now go ahead,' he remarked. 'I do hate to see such a pretty face in a rage.'"