

WHAT ARE YOU MAKING YOURSELF?

"Live for ever!" is the trade mark of life, the great seal of eternity. Earth is only a workshop; time, the clock of labour. All of us mortals—good or bad, great or little—are giving the shoulder to work. Ever at work, as the breath comes, and the breath goes; as the months wheel round and the years march away. Doing—what? Why, *making self*. Yes, my reader, this is the sublime vocation of us all. God has made man to make himself; gifted him with powers which, if consecrated to the giver, make the possessor a great man.

Now, you need not put your chin on your chest, shrug your shoulders, and smile a grim "impossible." I am not dreaming, nor talking nonsense, nor penning absurdities. Nothing but the truth. You may, you ought, to step above the human animals around you. Let men, if they will, glory in courting a fickle palate. Men was not made to be a worshiper of good cheer, or a devotee of dainties. Let men, if they will, be every day slaves to what they carry on their backs, or shake in their purses. Poor things! they may feel, "Who is like me?" in butterfly garb and peacock splendor; but man was not made to make himself a bondsman to caterpillar spinings and grub cocoons. You must see further than a dish, and look higher than a hat-peg, if you wish to stand a true man in the presence of God. God has made you awfully strong over your noble powers. With all your brains, you may make yourself a fool; with all your feelings, a tyrant; with all your sense of right, a heartless rogue. You may make gain your god, till bank notes cloak every better feeling, and you gloat in miserly loneliness over yellow dust. You may crust over your heart with hatred to all, petrify every brotherly feeling till friends are nuisances, and life a dray of misery; till, perchance, you die in a madhouse, or meet eternity a suicide. And then, "Who made you?"

"Not so," you say; "I can hold up my head in scorn of such meanness and depravity."

Stay! Put that head of yours down again till you answer the question, "Am I in the way such 'poor things, have trod?' Every end has a path leading to it. Many a pleasant lane have I travelled, little thinking that the end was a ditch or a quagmire. Little things are near relatives to greater ones. Little sins are grandfathers to great crimes. An angry taunt is the first mile-stone on a road the end of which is murder. An underhand trick is a by-path to fraud, imposition, and roguery. A spark of conceit is the germ of silly pride and disgusting foppery. A sly glance at tempting evil is often a seed of reckless impurity. Sculptors chisel their masterpieces stroke by stroke; and the words of men make themselves so by degrees.

Not very many years ago there lived a boy, simple, confiding, and loving, as all other "little dears" are; but ere the dimples of his face were gone, while mother still doled out his daily dose of white sugar, he began to manifest a cruel disposition. Many a poor fly, promenading the window panes, lost his liberty, his wings, and his life. Spiders would suffer amputation of limb and leg; cockroaches would expire on a cotton "bowstring;" beetles and butterflies would without mercy be butchered; ants would have a warm bath in the seething copper; and worms would expire in half dozens on the hook. What did this boy make himself? Why, if, a few years since, you had visited the old city of N., you might have seen hanging in the gaze of excited thousands a murderer. Our cruel boy was father to the savage cut-throat. He died, as he made himself, hard as the granite walls of the building that threw a shadow over his swinging carcass. It is a long distance in depravity, between beheading a fly and spilling a man's blood; but the one schooled the boy a savage, and the other ended his education by making the man an assassin. No rare instance this. Many a criminal has started for the gallows in a pinafore, and many a convict began his "penal servitude" ere he doffed his jacket.

Reader, how is it with you? What are you making yourself?