

THE YOUNG MAN AND HIS PROBLEM

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FOR YOU

At this season of the year our thoughts turn to home, Christmas comes to us weighted with precious memories. We are thoughtful with emotions of appreciation at Christmastide—if at all. The best gift which a young man can make to a kind father is a verbal or written acknowledgement of the love and consideration which has been lavished upon him. Such an expression of appreciation brings infinite joy to a father's heart. He has been planning for you, working for you, living for you—and all his soul asks for is just one word of spoken gratitude. Here is a beautiful picture.

YOUR BEST MOOD

What do you think about when you are in your best mood? Is it money, fame, power, or achievement? The fancies of fifteen are the facts of fifty. When God has some special work for a man to do He speaks to him in his youth. These dreams, visions, moods, sentiments, aspirations and ambitions of youth are shot through with a glorious prophetic quality. So study them, prize them, and treasure them. When Bismarck was a boy he was distressed that the German people were separated into more than thirty kingdoms. It was the dream and ambition of his life that they should be united into one great fellowship. The ideal was realized when the smoke of the Franco-Prussian war cleared away and the venerable King of Prussia was crowned Emperor of a united Germany in the palace of Versailles.

DON'T BE DISCOURAGED

The greatest danger in life is the danger of discouragement. We are apt to get discouraged even when we are doing well. The physical reaction which comes from a splendid effort in which we have thrown in heart, soul and mind is prone to open the trap door of doubt for every shadow which fear can suggest. It is a great thing to keep the mind clear, bright, normal and hopeful. God Himself can make little out of a man whose moods have conquered him. Remember that every great soul has had a battle with doubt. "During the nine years that I was his wife," says the widow of the great artist Opie, "I never saw him satisfied with one of his productions, and often, very often, have I seen him enter my sitting-room, and throwing himself in an agony of despondency on the sofa, exclaim, 'I never, never shall be a painter as long as I live!'"

SYMBOLS

Everything in nature is a symbol. When we have learned the whole meaning of nature we shall have learned the whole thought of God. We are here to learn. We are here to learn how to learn. We are here to learn how to think. There is not a bird that flies, or a speck that floats, or a wind that blows which does not bring you a message. The lucky man is the man who learns how to think. Every man has two eyes—an eye which looks outward and an eye which looks inward. An original thinker uses both eyes and looks both ways. It will be well for us if we learn to heed the suggestions of nature. "Innumerable apples had fallen from trees, often hitting heedless men on the head as if to set them thinking, but not before Newton did any one realize that they fall to the earth by the same law which holds the planets in their courses, and prevents the momentum of all the atoms in the universe from hurling them wildly back to chaos."

THE PRAIRIE

Here we are, in a thousand wind-swept towns and villages, living, dreaming and working, on a vast prairie without deep valleys or high mountain, struggling with the dead average of nature and the dull monotony of life. What have we, this side of the foothills of the Rockies, to inspire thought or set the soul on fire? I answer that sublimity is not in the mountain, or the river, or the valley but in the soul. And the mind which can find beauty in the vine-clad hill can find splendor in the moor and fen and rock. When young Marshall, afterward Chief Justice of the United States, made a journey with some friends to Virginia, and came to the mountain scenery amidst which Patrick Henry was born and brought up, he suddenly stopped, and, gazing at the mountains, exclaimed, "What a grand sight! how soul-inspiring and thought-producing! No wonder Patrick Henry was an orator; no wonder he was eloquent; how could he have been otherwise, reared amidst such sublime scenes as these!" "Young man," said an old farmer, who had accompanied the tourists, "those mountains have been there ever since Patrick Henry was born, and there has been no orator like him since!"

A YOUNG MYSTIC

Learn to look on the spiritual side of things. By the spiritual I mean the hidden, the interior, the unseen, the meaning back of the metaphor. Everything that is, speaks of something which is not. All nature is an alphabet spelling out the thought of God. There are thoughts which come to us through an intuition which is indefinable and without explanation and indefinable. These are suggestive words in Richard Jefferies' "Story of My Heart." "I was not more than eighteen years old," he says, "when an inner and esoteric meaning began to come to me from all the visible universe, and indefinable aspirations filled me. I found them in the grass and fields, under the trees, on the hill-tops, at sunrise and in the night. There was a deeper meaning everywhere." And again he writes, "I looked at the hills, at the dewy grass and then up through the elm branches to the sky."

UP AND AT IT

The time to get up is immediately after you have fallen down. Never mind looking at the spot where you fell or rubbing that part of your anatomy where your physical form first struck the earth. Remember that life is a conflict and the man who wins, if he falls, must rise before the bell rings. Many a man who has failed in life would have won if the time spent in moping doubt and crouching fear had been occupied with determined effort. There are just as many odds against your enemy as there are against you. Fight your fears by fighting your enemy. Get on your feet. Get into field. Up and at it. Waste no time on useless regrets. Gen. Sherman, in his "Memoirs," calls attention to a very wise observation of Gen. Grant, made to him after the close of the first day's battle of Shiloh. He said, "At the crisis of the battle it often happens that both sides seem to be defeated. The side that is able, at this point, to renew the attack, is sure to win."

KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is great and vast. It speaks out in biography, history, poetry, philosophy, and science. You might well imagine as you walk through the silent corridors of a great library that universal knowledge in its length, breadth, height and depths could never be grasped and comprehended but there are only a few things which it is absolutely necessary to know. Listen to the words of John Morley: Mr. John Morley has defined the two fundamental elements of character which the university should develop. And these two elements are of the simplest nature, yet the two which from his experience he found to be most frequently forgotten. First, there must be the clear understanding between cause and effect. Second, the sure distinction between right and wrong. "I know of no two lessons," he added, "more to be impressed upon the two great political parties—more perhaps on one party than on the other—than the need of this appreciation of the relation between precedent and policy, and between right and wrong."

WORTH WHILE

That book which you are reading, that song which you are singing, that play which you are witnessing, that business which you are building, that game which you are playing, that letter which you are writing, that habit which you are cultivating—is it worth while? Tell me, friend, is it worth while? Here is a remark from "Public Opinion" about Holman Hunt: "Probably Hunt's first and strongest feeling would have been that the aims of the younger men, for all their cleverness of execution, were often futile," says the Times. "The old realist would have been ill satisfied with modern realism. 'Paint what you see,' he would have said, and 'paint it as you see it; but take care that what you see is worth painting!'"

TOO SENSITIVE

Don't be too sensitive. Thin-skinned people have an exceedingly unhappy time of it. They are affected by remarks which were never intended for them and influenced by the words which they imagine ought to have been spoken but never were. The trouble is that the sensitive man imagines that the universe ought to centre in and around himself. Self-forgetfulness is the secret of happiness. Keep sweet when folks are abusing you. Keep quiet when the crowd is cursing you with adverse criticism. Act on principles which are universal and never open the door of your mind for the damning influence of a personal grudge. Dr. Rush used to say, in his valedictory address to the students of the medical college: "Young gentlemen, have two pockets—a small pocket and a big pocket; a small pocket in which to put your fees, a large pocket in which to put your annoyances."

THE POWER ROOM

The greatest power room in the world is the human brain, and the human brain can operate within the narrowest limitations. An original thinker can think behind bars or in dungeon depths. Thought is free, democratic and universal. There are no chains which can hold down or hold in a man's inner sentiments or emotions. Thought is free. Hard floor, stony wall, narrow window, or plain equipment never robbed a man of the possible delights of meditation and contemplation. The great New England philosopher wrote the "Freedom of the Will" in a little closet six by eight feet. But Jonathan Edwards was victorious over his surroundings, and compelled the Scottish philosopher's tribute, "The intellect of Edwards was the greatest achievement of the century."

PROMPTNESS

Get into the habit of doing things promptly. It will save time, make friends and add to your force of character. Promptness is generalship in the details of life. The strong man compels the first thing, the last thing, the "next thing" and the "other thing" to get into line and march orderly in the daily procession of events. Such generalship creates certain laws of gravitation which brings things "your way." When the Lords of the Admiralty, in a case of pressing need, asked Sir Charles Napier, in London, when he would be ready to start for India, he replied: "In half an hour, gentlemen, if necessary."

BEARING UP

Are you game? Can you accept punishment like a stoic? Can you bear up under criticism when it is cruel and unjust? Can you "pass under the rod" when circumstances seem to cut and when fate is wantonly unfavorable? Can you smile in the hour of your social neglect and keep sweet when men are returning cruel acts for kind words? There are two things which test a man's temperament—the hour of social rejection and the coronation hour. The author of "As I Remember" writes: "I saw General Scott when he returned from his Mexican campaign, covered with glory, to confront his political enemies at home, and I was also with him in 1852 when the announcement arrived that he had been defeated as a presidential candidate. Were I called upon to decide in which character he appeared to the greater advantage, that of the victor or the vanquished, I should unhesitatingly give my verdict to the latter. There was a grandeur in his bearing under the adverse circumstances with which the success and glamour of arms could not compare."

THE GREATEST PLEASURE

Most men are seeking for happiness and looking for pleasure. One man finds his pleasure in those things which appeal to the physical appetites. Another gives himself to ambition and seeks for all those elements which add to a man's personal power. There are still others who have discovered the pleasures of the intellectual realm, poetry, art, music and high class drama. Many are satisfied to gather around them a circle of tested friends and live in the golden light of glowing fireside companionship. The higher the ideal—the better the man. But there is one joy within the easy reach of all: A gentleman was once asked: "What action afforded you the greatest pleasure in life?" His answer was: "When I stopped the sale of a poor widow's furniture by paying a small sum due for her rent and received her blessing." Henry Drummond remarks that if we look back through our lives we will find that the moments that shine the brightest and that we count the happiest are the moments when we have done things in the spirit of love.

TEMPTATION

A reputation for honor helps to keep a man honorable. As a rule men do not ask a temperance man to drink. The suggestion would be an insult. The saddest thing about an intimation that your co-operation is desired in the accomplishment of that which is wrong is the reflection which is thus cast on your own character. Jesus, the Christ, said a very deep and profound thing about Himself when he said: "The son of perdition cometh and shall find nothing in me." Henry Ward Beecher said in his oration on Charles Sumner: "In a venal, corrupt time, he held trust and power unsullied and unsuspected. Nothing can speak better for the judgment of corrupt men than the fact that they never dared to approach him—for Mr. Sumner said, with inimitable naivete, 'People speak of Washington as being corrupt. I do not believe a word of it; I have been in Washington fifteen years and more, and I have never seen a particle of corruption!' No, he never had. He was the last man that any corrupt schemer dared to approach."