

Seeing Your Way in Life All Foolishness.

By JOHN A. HOWLAND.

A man the other day threw himself into the Chicago river, and when he was fished out pleaded in extenuation of his folly that he was driven to it by "not seeing his way in life." He was in fair health, had no one depending on him, and had over \$20 in his pockets. The magistrate expressed his opinion that he was a fool, and, in consideration of the mud and water he had swallowed, dismissed him, informing him there were a good many people who did not see their way in this life, and if they all went and threw themselves into the river the river would be blocked to navigation.

I find that this not "seeing one's way" has almost assumed the complexion of a nervous complaint. The number of young fellows and young girls who are oppressed with terror because they "cannot see their way" is amazing.

"I cannot see my way in my business," a young clerk informed me a day or two back. "I mean to give it up and go in for something else."

He feels certain there must be some occupation in which an industrious and averagely level headed fellow can clearly see his way to fortune from the beginning.

"I am 21 now," a girl confided to me, solemnly, "and what's the good of going on as I am? I cannot see my way a bit. When I am 40 or 50 I shall not want to work like this, and what shall I do?"

"Look ahead of you; see your way. Choose your path, and say, 'That's the path for me,' and stick to it. That is how to succeed in life."

Those words were uttered by Theophilus Horter, who from being almost penniless has amassed an enormous fortune. What Mr. Horter, of course, means is that he found success by acting as he advises others to act. In an account I read of him in another paper I discovered that (1) he obtained his first post in a store by an accidental meeting with an influential person on a train; (2) that a great fire, in which the store manager met death, pitchforked Horter into his place; (3) that a speculation in oil shares made him rich at a bound; (4) that, being rich already, he married an even richer woman.

Now, how far is it possible to believe that Mr. Horter saw his way in these circumstances, and how far were they merely dependent on good fortune? I cannot, for my part, rid myself of the idea that while Mr. Horter is a shrewd, hard working man, no doubt he has by no means really seen his way on some of the most important occasions of his life. But I have not the slightest doubt that advice of his will worry a good number of people, who will come to the conclusion that they are lacking in all that makes for success because they cannot see a good deal farther than a human being was ever intended to.

The celebrated forger, Jim the Penman, used to boast that he "could see through a brick wall." In a famous note written to one of his accomplices, he declared he saw his way ahead for years of prosperous villainy. A few months later he found himself condemned to lifelong punishment! It is well to take the statements of people who claim such wonderful sagacity with a big pinch of salt.

"I claim foresight, but I make no pretension to powers of divination," said Moltke, when, in discussing a military campaign, an officer wanted to know what would happen next after a certain point. Moltke could not tell him, and, indeed, did not hesitate to say that he considered the questioner absurd in seeking to know what was hidden in the future.

"I only know," he declared, "that whatever happens, all that man can

do to make it fortunate will have been done."

Moltke had his own peculiar way of looking ahead. Perhaps no man could see farther. But people are not satisfied with what satisfied him. That is one of the failings of humanity which makes the fortunes of fortune tellers.

"What does the future hold in store for you? Can you see along that mysterious path of life which lies before you?" one of these humbugs says in a circular I got a day or two ago. "Are your eyes dim and unable to penetrate the mists which surround what fate has marked out for you?"

The man who has so kindly sent me this invitation to consult him is quite right in conjecturing that my eyes are not of that wonderful capacity that can see "what years hence will unfold." But I can see plainly so far, that I have a certain amount of money in my pocket that I would much rather see there than lose sight of by letting it pass into the pocket of this man, who assures me he has such excellent vision into the future.

A police authority informs me that never did fortune tellers find so many patrons as they do to-day. There are thousands of people afflicted with the anxiety of "seeing their way" much farther than Providence ever intended they should. They remind one of Lord Beaconsfield's remark—that the worry of the present was not enough for some people. They must add to it the worry of an imaginary future which never arrived as they pictured it.

In some respects one can certainly see one's way. The man or woman who never saves must clearly perceive that he or she will have no money in the bank. It does not require a fortune teller to predict that some people will be ill or unfortunate. Nothing can help it.

When Mr. Horter tells me that he saw before him his path all along those sixty-seven years of prosperity, I really think he must have forgotten a good deal, and is taking to himself some credit for much that Providence has done for him. However, I should not find fault with him, only that these arrogant statements of successful men frequently have a depressing effect on those who are less lucky. He will not have done service to the world if he convinces people that if they cannot see their way for a few years—say, two or so—ahead, they are deficient in the quality that spells "success."

"To hear some people talk, you might think they worked Providence," said Josh Billings: "an' a mighty good job they make of it. I've tried it myself, and my opinion is that it wants a very remarkable man to make a success of it."

Life, in fact, is much like a military campaign. "A commander must have his plan," said Wellington, "but carrying it out is an hour to hour business. I know of no campaign that was in the end the campaign the general had expected at the beginning."

Looking over the lives of my friends, it is strange to see how oddly they have varied from the pretty map drawn years ago. The campaign has not been that expected at the beginning. With some it has been more triumphant and shorter. With others, just the reverse.

"You see," observed the proud organizer of an exploring expedition, who was talking over its prospects with Stanley. "I have provided for every contingency."

"You have only omitted calculating one thing, as far as I can see," remarked Stanley, "and that is the contingency that always does happen and that no one has foreseen." They will come in life, and do not start—they are as often good contingencies as bad.

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