

The Young Man and His Problem

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MOODS

There are spells, moods and inspirations which belong to each one of us. A business man will "subscribe" more "after dinner," as a rule, than before. Preachers are "tired" on Monday, shopkeepers are irritable on Saturday. Ladies are not to be "seen" before three o'clock. Musicians are apt to be nervous just before the curtain rings up. You should study the mood of your neighbor, and, you should know your own mood. Lord Byron could write best at night. Robert Burns' best inspirations came to him in the spring. Carlyle built for himself "a soundless room." Lyman Abbott used to write in the morning before breakfast and nap after the first day's meal was over. Study your own mood, if you would get the most out of yourself. The Earl of Beaconsfield thus describes the way in which he wrote one of his most famous novels: "My thoughts, my passion, the rush of my invention, were too quick for my pen. Page followed page; as a sheet was finished, I threw it on the floor. I was amazed at the rapid and prolific production, yet I could not stop to wonder. In half a dozen hours I sank back utterly exhausted, with an aching frame. I rang the bell, ordered some refreshment, and walked about the room. . . . I set to again, and it was midnight before I retired to my bed."

A WORKING THEOLOGY

Every man must have "a working theology." Every man must have a master motive and that motive should find its source in the Eternal. The man who believes in no God, no heaven, no hell, no immortality for the soul and no soul-qualities residing in his body, will be, at best, a pagan, a gentile, an Esau. Most men believe something, and the thoughtful man gives to that "something" mental shape and verbal expression. There are three great mental distinctions marking the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error. The great thought of a personal God, just, loving and eternal is enough to steer by if a man had no other definite conviction. In the life of Henry Ward Beecher there is a very striking passage. A young man wrote to the great preacher and said to him: "I am sinking down into the depths of shame; preach the terrors of hell to me—anything to me—I shall be at the church next Sabbath—anything that will save me." The preacher said: "That night I preached about the Fatherhood of God: I felt, if that would not save him, nothing would."

YOUR MOTHER

It is not every man who has been blessed with the memory of a loving mother. There are women whose qualifications for motherhood never existed aside from the physical possibilities of sex. There are parents whose personal ambition and sordid greed has exterminated every atom of sympathy and every suggestion of love. There are mothers who have never prayed over their offspring or wept over the mistakes or blunders of their children. Young man, if Providence has blessed you with a tender hearted mother, thoughtful solicitude and true, then, in the name of that kind providence, recognize the gift and be grateful for the divine favor bestowed upon you. The historian has said concerning Byron's mother: "Though Byron's mother had occasional fits of a tumultuous kind of affection for her son, she more usually abused and raged at him, and it is little wonder that he never felt any love for her. To add to the effect of her treatment of him, his feeling of resentment was increased by a deformity with which he was born; a lameness, which, increased by ignorant surgical treatment, was made harder to bear by his mother's heartless mockery. Like all abnormally sensitive children he was immediately amenable to kindness, but of that he had little from his mother. Her hysterical, passionate attitude to him, alternating between senseless petting and violently abusing him as a 'lame brat,' made him sullen and defiant towards her, while to his nurses (in whom he was fortunate) he clung with an affection that was pathetic."

PLAIN MEN

In these days of sudden success and rapid money making it's a mighty hard thing to tell "Who's who." What a difference a suit of clothes makes! A man may be as ignorant as a poor specimen of uninformed "white trash" from the cotton fields of the south, but how dignified he appears when tailored, barbered, shod and bejewelled. A silk hat, a white shirt, a well pressed suit, shoes which shine like ebony, a cane and a cigarette—and the trick is done. We fools, take off our hat to anything which is well dressed, without ever asking how the thing is done

—on cash or credit. What a consolation it is to know that great men have usually been plain men. We quote the following from the pages of a popular magazine. "Grant cared little for dress. As, in the army, he preferred to forget his gold lace and epaulets, and to go about in a careless uniform and dilapidated slouch hat, so, even as president, he wore the plainest clothing. I have known him frequently to jam the omnipresent big black cigar between his teeth, slip out of the White House by a back exit, and pace alone for miles up and down sequestered Washington streets, endeavoring to solve the great problems of state that confronted him. Though I always found Grant approachable and courteous, he talked little except in monosyllables, listened intently, carefully analyzed every suggestion, and, having once made up his mind, all the king's horses and all the king's men could not swerve him."

BELATED HONORS

Train yourself to think clearly. Let there be no room in your mind for cant. Give every known superstition a wide berth. Study the motives of men. See to it that conceit or vain glory does not lead you astray. Take things for what they are worth. Remember that titles and positions are costly nothings which are thrown at you when you have money enough to pay for them. Keep an eye on the men who have a "Mr." for you when you are poor and an "Esq." for you when you are rich. Remember that the difference between poverty and wealth is not character but cash. An interesting incident is recorded concerning William Cullen Bryant, the author and poet. "In 1842, when Charles Dickens was here, Mr. Bryant was invited by a prominent citizen to meet him at dinner, but declined. 'That man,' he said to me, 'has known me for years without asking me to his house, and I am not now going to be made a stool-pigeon to attract birds of passage that may be flying about.' He met Dickens, however, on another occasion."

HAPPINESS AT SIXTY

The youth of twenty is not worrying about the time when he will be "sixty." But he will probably "get there" before he has time to worry about it. Some morning he will find a gray hair hanging over his face, a slight stoop in his back, a little extra flesh behind his chin, a pair of glasses on the ridge of his nose and a cane in his hand—and an inner voice will exclaim, "Sixty!" You are getting there, my boy, as fast as the wheels of time can carry you. And, when that period comes, your real satisfactions will be moral and spiritual. It will be a great thing then to be able to say to yourself concerning your whole life: "I have been on the right side! I have done my best!" Self respect is better than public praise. Public praise and popular applause may never come. If you look to the world for appreciation, recognition and commendation you will probably be disappointed. Lord Randolph Churchill, one of the most distinguished of Englishmen of the last century, in the year 1891 wrote a letter to his wife telling her that he had quit politics once and forever. He said: "More than two-thirds, in all probability, of my life is over, and I will not spend the remainder of my years in beating my head against a stone wall. There has been no consideration, no indulgence, no memory or gratitude—nothing but spite, malice, and abuse. I am quite tired and dead sick of it all, and will not continue political life any longer."

PROVIDE AN OBJECT

Slaves as a rule are dishonest. Rob a man of his personality and he will rob you of your property. The corporation which defrauds its men will be defrauded by its men. The best man needs a motive to inspire him. Self-sacrifice is only the sacrifice of the lower-self to the higher-self. Never ask a man to do anything for you without the thought of a proportionate compensation. Let the compensation be proportionate—always. Poor pay means poor service. Low wages means no ambition. In every relationship of life we should make the reward match the benefit. The other day a woman left in a toilet room of a hotel in New York two diamond rings which she valued at \$1,000. As soon as she discovered her loss she hurried back to the hotel and informed the proprietor. The attendant of the toilet room at once produced the rings. The owner, greatly relieved, after a few moments' reflection drew a fifty cent piece from her pocket-book and offered it as a reward for the faithful service. Then the proprietor of the hotel handed the maid ten dollars, and no doubt the owner of the rings wishes she had shown a decent appreciation of that maid's honesty.

ORIGINALITY

Be original. Go at things in your own way. Trust your own inspirations. Experiment with your own ideas. When a new thought dawns on you think it out, write it out, plan it out, and then ask yourself the question: "Why not?" Do not be afraid to venture. If you are not willing to fail you are not worthy to succeed. Do not doubt yourself because others fail to exercise confidence in you. Remember that originality lives in an atmosphere of loneliness. If you are satisfied to go with the crowd, you will not go very far. The crowd is made up of folks who have not the character or the courage to stand alone. Be original! Harvey, though his life was prolonged to his eightieth year, hardly lived to see his great discovery of the circulation of the blood established: no physician adopted it; and when at length it was received, one party attempted to rob Harvey of the honor of the discovery, while another asserted that it was so obvious, that they could only express their astonishment that it had ever escaped observation.

THE OTHER FELLOW

Treat every person as a human being. Recognize the rights of each individual. Try and "put yourself in his place." The scrub woman will appreciate the lifted hat. The maid behind your chair will not be indifferent to your glance of recognition as you enter the banquet hall. The family servant who has received you at the door of the mansion for a decade will be pleased when you inquire concerning his health. The office boy will be inspired to hope for better things and brighter days when he discovers that you are interested in his personal welfare. Whatever, in your experience, has brought joy to you will bring a measure of satisfaction to others. And you can never know the future possibilities of any one of your associates. John Trebonius, the instructor of Martin Luther, always appeared before his boys with uncovered head. "There may be among them," said he, "those who shall be learned doctors, sage legislators, nay, princes of the Empire."

SCRIBBLE

Scribble. Take notes. Write down your own thoughts. Forge short sentences. Get in the way of building a paragraph. There is a style of architecture to be followed in the construction of a literary article—learn that style. There is a peculiar inspiration which belongs to literature. You can "write" things which will never come to you in public speech or private conversation. Thoughts will leap from the tip of your pen which will never come to you in any other way. Frances Ridley Havergal, writing in February, 1868, says: "I have not had a single poem come to me for some time, till last night, when one shot into my mind. All my best have come in that way, Minerva fashion, full grown. It is so curious, one minute I have not an idea of writing anything, the next I have a poem; it is mine, I see it all, except laying out rhymes and metre, which is then easy work! I rarely write anything which has not come thus."

GOOD NATURE

Be good natured. A good disposition is religion, morality, chivalry, tact, and character, all in one. Study to be kind. Watch the sensitive points of your neighbors. See to it that in your program of life no one is neglected. Be generous to the poor, kind to the aged, attentive to the homely, considerate toward the eccentric and loving in your dealings with all. Marshall P. Wilder speaking of his visits to the home of Robert G. Ingersoll, the great agnostic said: "Whenever I am there, and somebody persuades me to get up and recite or say something, Mr. Ingersoll is so anxious that whatever is done shall be thoroughly enjoyed by as many as possible that he calls up all his servants and lets them stand in the hall to listen."

GET YOUR HAND IN

Young men should enter the open door. There is nothing like experience. Get your hand in. If you are nominated for office, accept the nomination. If you are elected secretary of your society, ask for the "records." If you are appointed as a delegate to the provincial convention, ask for instructions. If you are elected the superintendent of the Sunday school, ascend the platform and ring the bell. If they ask you to preach, look for a text. Get your hand in. Get into the way of doing things. Get up a reputation for "every good word and work." Roosevelt said: "I put myself in the way of things—and they happened."