

criticism is forfeited, is seen when one resents kindly criticism as if it were an insult. An insult is a hateful and contemptuous imputation; criticism is a judgment concerning our character or action which purports, at least, to be a just moral estimate. To treat a criticism as an insult, is to indulge the very spirit which gives rise to insult, and thus to lower one's self to the level of the action which he so earnestly resents. There is no profit in criticism for any person who in these ways refuses to treat criticism for what it is, and to try to estimate it for what it is worth.

We shall never profit by criticism unless we are willing to accept and consider it. To persist in assuming that whatever we do and think and are, is right any way, and is not to be challenged, is to shut out of our lives one of the greatest aids to our improvement. The person who is indifferent to criticism, or defiant of it, at length sinks down, not only into the practice, but into the justification, of faults which mar his character and make him less of a man than he might have been if he had been less narrow and selfish in his estimates of himself.

The ability to profit by criticism will depend largely upon our self-knowledge. If one has developed the rare power candidly and justly to criticise himself, he will have the ability to estimate the criticisms of others, and the disposition to profit by them, while by comparing his own self-judgments with the criticisms of others, he will test his own estimates, and will be enabled to render them more clear and just. Here, as in so many spheres of life, the power to use external things depends chiefly upon inner condition and capacity. Better than "to see ourselves as others see us," is to see ourselves as we really are. Then we shall be able to appreciate and profit by the way in which "others see us." Without judicious and candid self-knowledge there is no profiting by criticism.

It is always interesting and important to observe how the simple lessons and plain duties of life are bound up with the deepest and most essential elements of character. To know how to take and use what the world has to offer us, is to have the true knowledge and the right control of ourselves and a just estimate of what will conduce to our best growth. Our best development depends not so much upon the outward conditions in which we are placed, or the events which take place around us, as upon the way in which we look at life and the spirit in which we take its opportunities, its duties, and its trials. Every task, every burden, every hardship, is a new test which we are called upon to sustain. Perhaps none of these tests is more severe than the test which criticism imposes. To meet it in a spirit of candor and with a sincere desire for self-improvement is a real achievement in the formation of character and an evidence of just and wise views of life.

It should always be remembered that criticism makes us neither better nor worse than we are. "This wise world is mainly right" in its estimates of us, and no individual criticism which is palpably unjust in its severity can do us any permanent harm. When it is certain that strictures made upon us are baseless and unjust, we can afford to treat them as powerless to harm us, and should be able to rise above them. It is the truth in criticism which has most power to help or to harm us—to help us if we accept it and seek to remedy the defect which it has disclosed, to harm us if we rebel against it, and refuse to accept the lesson which it is able to teach us.

All our education is a process of practice under criticism. The student who is eager to discover and to correct the faults of his knowledge and thinking, and who thus learns to exercise a critical judgment upon his own in-