

instead of looking to himself for his failure, he lays the blame on fate or luck, grows reckless, and ceases all attempt at self-control or self-improvement.

I have said that the best use a man can make of his mistakes is to avoid repeating them in the future. It seems to me that the worst use is to brood over them till he becomes melancholy, or grows bitter at their natural consequences. If a mistake is reparable, let him never cease his efforts till he has repaired it. If, as is too often the case, it is incurable, let him bear the consequences manfully and cheerfully, devoting no more time or thought to his mistake than is necessary to help him from falling into it a second time—

“But past who can recall or done undo?”

Not God omnipotent, nor Fate ”

says Milton in “Paradise Lost,” and Shakespeare has told us that—

“To mourn a mischief that is past and gone

Is the next way to draw new mischief on.”

Nature has her moral as well as her physical hypochondriacs; and to brood too much over our mistakes is as bad for the healthfulness of the mind as brooding over our ailments is for the healthfulness of the body. Nay, even when our misfortunes seem to come from no fault of our own; when, so far as we can learn from rigid self-examination, we need not reproach ourselves with any consciousness of mistake; when it seems as if circumstances were really too strong for us; even, then, if our misfortunes are past cure and inevitable, let us not add to our misery by vain regrets. If we cannot alter our fate, let us alter ourselves. As the well-known Spanish proverb says: “If we cannot get what we like, let us try to like what

we can get.” A great authority has told us that “He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.” Cheerfulness, like other qualities, has the faculty of growing by what it feeds on.

Doubtless this power of gratefully accepting what there is of good in our lot, instead of brooding over the bad, comes more easily to some than to others. Some are naturally of the sanguine temperament, others of the melancholy. Yet, if we only begin young enough, I think much may be done by ourselves to enable us to acquire a habit of looking at the bright side of life, even by those who are by nature gloomy or morose. “For use can almost change the stamp of nature.” If we will resolutely set our minds to remember how much there is of good in our lives, instead of repining at the bad; if we will think more of what we have than of what we have not; of what we have gained rather than what we have lost; of the love and affection of those to whom we are dear rather than of the hatred and malice of those to whom we are anything but dear; we shall have gone a long way towards acquiring that habit of cheerfulness, without which there can be little true growth. For cheerfulness is a sort of moral sunshine acting upon the character as sunlight upon a flower: *it helps it to expand*. Nor must we desist as an aid to this habit of cheerfulness that love of innocent fun and frolic that seems almost inseparable from healthy young life. “There is a wisdom that looks grave and sneers at merriment,” says the American novelist Hawthorne, “and again a deeper wisdom that stoops to be gay as often as occasion serves, and oftentimes avails itself of shallow and trifling grounds of mirth; because if we wait for more substantial ones, we can seldom be gay at all.” Should there be some among my readers who may be doubting whether