

The Young Man and His Problem

ASSERT YOURSELF. There comes a time in the history of every man when he must assert himself. Your friends and your neighbors will not always be true to your own best interests. You have a personality to be projected and an individuality to be protected. You must be true to yourself. The questions of destiny must be settled in the star chamber of your own soul. That's a splendid moment when a man pivots everything on a splendid inspiration. You remember that there came an hour in the life of Carlyle when a voice said, "Arise and settle thy destiny." Here is a bit from the biography of the ex-slave Frederick Douglass: "He knew that those slaves who could be whipped easiest were whipped oftenest; and he felt that he had listened too blindly to sermons in which non-resistance was enjoined as the peculiar virtue of the colored race. 'My hands,' he says, 'were no longer tied by my religion.'"

THE TEST OF RELIGION. The test of a man's religion is not to be found in a man's creed. His church may be orthodox, his hymn book beautiful, his preacher eloquent, his bible gilt edged, his catechism comprehensive, and his Sunday observances perfect, and yet his religion may be lacking in the one thing which would recommend it to the world—namely, Consistency. Rev. A. C. Dixon, of Chicago, in a sermon recently said: "A fish dealer on the coast said to a friend of mine, who approached him about being a Christian, 'Impossible, sir, and this order proves it. This customer pays for second class mackerel, and I ship them at his request under a first-class label.'"

A man's religion is subject to three tests: First, The home test—how does he behave at home? Second, The social test—how does he treat those who are beneath him socially? Third, The business test—is there any relationship between his business and his religion?

WEALTH WITHOUT WINGS. Thoreau said concerning the capitalists of his day: "They cannot cut down the clouds." He had discovered something beyond even the reach of commercial selfishness. "They cannot cut down the clouds." It is well to have some treasures too high for human hands. Something which no storm can touch, no cyclone move and no stain can mar. The treasures of memory belong to this class. "My mind a kingdom is." Great thoughts, high ideals, tender memories, and rich love belong to the imperishable. Every investment of influence for good belongs to the everlasting. A bankrupt merchant in New England said to me: "I have lost everything except—except the \$10,000 I gave the Y. M. C. A.—that's all I have left." He had something which he could not lose—wealth without wings!

SOLITUDE VS. SOCIETY. Carlyle, I think it was, said that if he had his choice between perpetual solitude and perpetual society he would prefer the former. I am not sure that his choice is the wise one, but I believe that a man's value to society is dependent upon the use which he makes of his hours of solitude and his place of retirement. I pity the man who is afraid to be alone. I pity the man who does not enjoy his own society. I pity the man who does not crave to be left alone occasionally with angels and spirits. "Draw the curtains and leave me alone," said old John Cotton on his death bed. "Draw the curtains and leave me alone, for I would speak for a while to the King." He knew the blessings of solitude.

COURAGE MOST NEEDED. The courage most needed in the day-by-day battle of life is not physical, but moral. Moral courage is concentrated self-mastery. It is optimism of the soul manifest in action. It is the kingly consciousness of the individual that there is a something that makes him greater than all the forces that can be ranged in battle array against him. Courage inspires coolness, confidence and calmness in meeting the problems of each new day with the full realization that it is our part to do each day the best we can by the light we have and to accept bravely whatever be the results. Even the angels can do no more than

their best, and the serene restfulness and peace that comes from knowing we have lived up to the highest self is a wondrous source of strength.

COURAGE AND LOYALTY. Man is the only animal that can put up a moral fight, the only one that can consciously, with blood tingling with the glow of purpose, seek to overcome an environment and to attain an ideal. We should esteem it not a duty but a privilege; we should not see it as an unjust pressure put upon us, but as a glorious opportunity to assert our power, to prove the moral mettle of our character. There are times in all lives when hope grows dark and effort seems useless, when nothing that we do seems to count, the forced retreats baffle and dishearten us, we have tried so hard and results seem so meager, and our weary hearts and our weakened hands long for rest and for freedom from the struggle. But we must not give up. This is the hour for new courage, for new drafts on our reserve, for new realization that truth must conquer, right must triumph and justice must prevail. Any coward can fight when inspired by the bugles of victory, when the thrill of purpose almost accomplished nerves him to a last great effort, when the shouts and cheers of comrades brighten his eye and strengthen his aim, but it takes a real man to fight on alone, unnoted, uncheered, with no inspiration but the voice of his soul ringing through the darkness. There is always more gain than we know, more progress than is evident, for every effort produces results, whether we see it or not. Another hour of courage, another day of loyalty, may bring victory greater than our rosiest dream dared to foreshadow.

A SONG AT WORK. Work is what it is made. The intelligent workman who throws his whole soul into what he is doing converts the drudgery of work into a pleasure. He enjoys his task and the contagion of his joyfulness spreads to others and enlightens their burdens. He it is who is always doing good in the world. "Give us, oh, give us, the man who sings at his work," exclaimed Carlyle. "Be his occupation what it may, he is equal to any two of those who follow the same pursuit in silent sullenness. He will do more in the same time—he will do it better—he will persevere longer. One is scarcely sensible to fatigue while he marches to music. The very stars are said to make harmony as they revolve in their spheres. Wondrous is the strength of cheerfulness, altogether past calculation its powers of endurance. Efforts to be permanently useful must be uniformly joyous—a spirit of sunshine, graceful from gladness—beautiful because bright."

TO GIVE IS GODLIKE. Happiness eludes every searcher for it, but comes quickly and abundantly to the one who seeks to bestow it upon someone else. The searcher for happiness may not get wealth, and power, and fame, but none of these advantages will avail anything in getting happiness. Even from friends it cannot be gotten, for happiness comes from what is given out rather than from that which is gathered in. Loving, unselfish service, the persistent enthusiastic effort day by day to bring sweetness, light, comfort and goodness into the lives of others will surely bring happiness into the life of any man. No sorrow of heart, no doubt of the future, no restlessness or aimlessness of the present, no loneliness or bitterness of soul, but will yield and be resolved into joy and peace and purpose as soon as the days are filled with the labors of love—as soon as the eagerness to get happiness is replaced by an eagerness to give it.

A DIFFERENCE OF DEGREE. The great men of the world do not differ in the least from the lowest and most degraded except in degrees. A power that in one is manifest at what we may call a thousand degrees is in the other at, say, twenty, and that twenty may have a potentiality of development exceeding even the thousand. All men have within them precisely the same elements for good and for evil; the differences are simply in degrees of development. This reveals a greater justice in nature than we usually concede her. The four-leaved clover is comparatively rare in the fields, and its three-leaved poor relation may

feel it has been unjustly treated, but under the revealing eye of the microscope every three-leaved clover is seen to have the germ of the fourth leaf. The four-leaved clover is simply one that has fulfilled its possibility, one in which nature has succeeded in carrying out her plans—that is all.

DO YOUR BEST. No one in life occupies a position so humble that he could not make the lives of those around him marvellously changed, brightened and inspired if he would merely live up to his possibilities in the way of kindness, thoughtfulness, cheer, good-will, influence and optimism. It is better to be a live coal, radiating light and heat for a day, than to be an icicle for a century; better to be an oasis of freshness and inspiration, if the oasis be even no larger than a table-cloth, than a desert of dreariness larger than the Sahara. We can all be intensive, even if we cannot be extensive; deep, if we cannot be wide; concentrated, if we cannot be diffused. The smallest pool of water can mirror the sun; it does not require an ocean. Let us live up to our possibilities for a single day and we will not have to die to get to Heaven; we will be making Heaven for ourselves and for others right here on this little spinning globe we call the earth.

TROUBLES GROW BY NURSING. Self-indulgence in pain is scarcely less dangerous than self-indulgence in pleasure; both destroy one's usefulness. Self-examination, that fetish of so many of the old philosophers becomes, very often, self-torture, without profit. "I study myself more than any other subject," declared Montaigne—a most unsafe example for many of us today to follow. Honest self-examination to a reasonable extent, in order that we may put ourselves into a right attitude toward God and our fellow men, is a duty, but, as Ritchie said, "There is such a thing as looking into self until despair fills the heart." Introspection as a habit results in hopeless melancholy and doubt. It causes many persons to sympathize too much with themselves. They make the most of their sorrows, and seem to find a certain gratification in giving way to them. Some one has said that troubles, like babies, grow larger by nursing. The only cure for sorrow is service for others.

A MAN'S POSSIBILITIES. Man is not put into this world as a music-box mechanically set with a certain number of tunes, but as a violin with infinite possibilities. This music no one can bring forth but the individual himself. He is placed into life not a finality, but a beginning; not a manufactured article, but raw material; not a statue, but an unshewn stone ready alike for the firm chisel of defined purpose or the subtle attribution of uncontrolled circumstances and conditions. It is only what a man makes of himself that really counts. He must disinfect his mind from that weakening thought that he has an absolutely predetermined capacity, like a freight car with its weight and tonnage painted on the side. He is growing, expansive, unlimited, self-adjusting to increased responsibility, progressively able for large duties and higher possibilities as he realizes them and lives up to them. The individual has no real limitations except those that are self-imposed.

CONSCIENCE AS A GUIDE. Your conscience will be true to you if you are true to your conscience. Your conscience is your compass. It will guide you right if it is not toyed with or improperly influenced. Read the following concerning Garibaldi and the ship's compass and then ask yourself the question if it is not possible for Conscience, the Compass of the Soul, to be so far deflected from the truth as to lead you astray.

"Throwing the bag over his back, and restoring his pistol to its place, Garibaldi calmly returned to the ship and at eleven o'clock they raised anchor and entered the Rio de la Plata. But when the morning came the amazing spectacle of breakers all around met their bewildered eyes: breakers larboard and starboard, ahead and astern, and the deck covered. Springing upon the mainyard, Garibaldi soon perceived the direction in which they ought to go; and although the danger was so great as to paralyze the men, and though part of their sail was taken away by the wind, the ship yielded quietly to the helm, and in an hour was out of danger. He was much puzzled to know by what stupidity they had come upon the rocks so clearly mapped and so well known, when by the compass they should have been miles wide of them. The cause was soon ascertained. Apprehensive, when he left the ship to deal with his debtor, that there might be trouble requiring a sanguinary solution, he had ordered the guns to be brought on deck, to defend them if attacked. The guns were placed in a cabin close to the compass, and the mass of metal had attracted the needle from its bearing."