

If there is one scene above all others that is pleasing, it is to see on commencement day a great rostrum filled with bright boys and girls about to leave school life, each with a cherished ambition; each eager to go forth into the bustle and worry of life, confident that the world only holds good for him, and so sure that he can and will do but good for it; each ambitious and hopeful to be the guiding star, and in fancy seeing himself the observed of all, the admired, the loved, the one bowed to. But to you who have put your commencement day years and years back of you there's a good amount of pathos in this scene. You know the disappointments, the rebuffs, the heartaches, and sorrows that must come; how the cherished ambitions slip farther and farther away; how work undone and never to be done, piles up before them—all this is come before, they learn that life is not 'what I will to do, but what is put before me to do.'

This particular commencement day was marked by an unusual number of bright, enthusiastic graduates. The rostrum was filled with eager, flushed faces, while below the chapel was a scene of bright gowns, roses, and fluttering fans, that seemed like bright-winged butterflies, resting for a moment, then fluttering on.

The orations had proceeded in usual routine. Carl's name was last, and Levi just before. As the boy before him finished Levi's face relaxed, and he glanced down to where his mother sat. She read his thought. He knew that he could excel the ones before him. Carl only was to be feared. With a quiet, manly confidence, Levi stepped to the front of the rostrum. He began with a clear voice his oration on 'Ambition': 'We need a loftier ideal to nerve us for heroic lives.' But as he proceeded his voice grew more steady and full. His eyes brightened, his cheeks flushed, and when, with body erect, and head proudly carried, he spoke: 'When the stately monuments of mightiest conquerors shall have become shapeless and forgotten ruins, the humble graves of earth's Howards and Frys shall still be freshened by the tears of fondly admiring millions, and the proudest epitaph shall be the simple entreaty, "Write me as one who loved his fellowmen,"' the applause rang through the chapel, and as he finished there was nodding of heads and bows and smiles, and a general feeling of congratulation over his success. There was no question thus far about the honors. Levi had far excelled the rest. As he walked back to his place his heart beat high with ambition. College and college joys floated before him. He glanced down at the faded, tired mother, and saw how bright and happy-looking his success had made her.

But Carl—how he dreaded Carl! Carl, who swept all honors before him! Carl, the orator and favorite! And Levi had need to fear him; for from the first, Carl was master of the situation. There was no nervousness or fear in his manner. He talked as easily as though conversing with the boys. Yet his nice conception of each idea and his rendition were worthy of an Antony. Levi's face grew pale as he listened. The scholarship was slipping from him, he knew. That fact he recognized as soon as Carl began. The flutter of fans had ceased. The room was still, all listening as if spellbound by the voice of the orator.

'O judgment thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason. Bear with me; my heart is in the coffin there with Caesar, and I must pause till it come back to me.' His voice became tender and loving, as though his own dear friend lay in a

casket before him. And tears sprang to his eyes.

As he directed his speech to the audience again he saw before him the delicate, sad face of Levi's mother. The resolution he had made to himself hours before came back to him. He heard again the conversation in the widow's cottage. 'Write me as one who loved his fellowmen;' yes, with him to this should lead all the rest. So in that part of the oration which he knew best, Carl stopped in the midst of a sentence, stumbled over the words, hesitated, corrected himself, and then went on more brilliant and determined than ever.

But the one blunder was sufficient. The scholarship was Levi's.

As the judges filed back into the room, and the chairman arose to give the decision, a stir was made among the audience, and a slender, delicate woman in widow's weeds, walked to the front of the hall.

'Pardon my interrupting, gentlemen,' she said, in her sweet toned voice, 'but before you give your decision I wish to tell you something that may change that decision.' She awaited their permission to speak. The judges gave their assent.

'I feel that the decision is in favor of my son.' The judges again bowed assent. 'But I must explain to you that from a point of honor the last contestant claims it. For two weeks Carl has read Levi's oration aloud during the evenings, that Levi might learn it. I have heard Carl give his oration without a fault, and from my knowledge of the whole affair I know that Carl's one fault this evening was premeditated. He knew what the scholarship meant to my son, and for Levi's sake, Carl placed himself second. The awarding of the scholarship rests with you, but I believe the explanation is due to Carl.'

She bowed and walked quietly back to her place. The judge arose to speak, but his voice was drowned with applause. He tried to explain that the decision could not be reconsidered, and attempted to eulogize Carl's action. But there was no restraining the audience. There were calls for 'Levi' and 'Carl,' and the boys were pushed forward, where they were surrounded by friends eager to congratulate them.

'You won it, Carl; you must take it,' whispered Levi.

'I'm getting more honor out of it now than I deserve,' said Carl, trying to laugh at the fuss. 'I wished it only for mother's sake, but she seems happy enough without it.' And he laughed heartily again, trying to forget the struggle he had gone through on the rostrum, when for one moment he hesitated to lose or win.

'Write me as one who loved his fellowmen, and, like the hero of the old story, Carl's name led all the rest.'

Why the First Step Costs.

You are a bright young boy or girl. You are beginning to feel the power to act for yourself. Childhood is past. The time has come when you not only may, but must decide many matters for yourself. The very fact that you can now do many things of which your parents need never know, brings temptation. One by one, other temptations are certain to strike you—not, of course, to do any gross thing—that would only disgust, it could not tempt you. Only the tiny waverings from right entice, only the little by-paths from the road in which you have always been led tempt you. They look harmless, quite as if they would lead in the same direction as the accustomed road, only in a new and pleasanter way. No one ever

turns abruptly from right to evil, although a square 'right-about-face' soon becomes necessary if one would return from evil to good.

'It is the first step that costs'—the rest is only a slipping, slipping, drifting, drifting, until the awakening shock comes.

The first time you do something you feel best to say nothing about it at home; the first time you accept a glass of punch flavored, no matter how slightly, with spirits, the first time you allow yourself to be drawn into questionable amusements, you have taken that expensive first step. Why is it expensive?

Simply because you have 'established a precedent.' After once doing one of those things you will have, besides the former temptation, your own reputation in addition to combat. 'You did it the other evening' is the strongest argument that can be used against your scruple.

The boys will say, 'You drank punch last week at John's camp, now you must have a glass of beer with me. It is just as harmless.' Or a girl will plead: 'You let your mother think you were going to the church social with Ella, when she took you to the park. You can do it again and go to the theatre with me. The tickets are bought, and we shall feel hurt if you don't come with us now.'

When once you have taken the step you have entangled yourself in a web. You struggle half-heartedly and its meshes close about you one by one, until tiny as they are, you realize that escape from them would be very difficult.

Then but one course is wise—break away altogether. Some of the meshes that bind you will still seem very delightful. You will wish you could slip away from some without giving up the others. It cannot be done. Right-about-face and go the other way. Why? Look about you.

Which are the happiest people in your community; which have the most solid fun; the most lasting good times, of the three classes you see, those who are utterly unprincipled, those who throw themselves whole-heartedly into right doing and helpful work for those about them, or those who waver miserably between the two?

Be honest about it; think of it carefully, and you will decide wisely. It is only thoughtlessness that leads into wrong. Thoughtlessness is fatal. No one goes into questionable things deliberately; one drifts only because in the whirl of gaiety one does not, cannot stop to consider.

Therefore, if you are a bright, young boy or girl, just at the threshold of your freedom, take time now to decide in which direction your first step will be taken; the first step towards rights costs, but prepare to take it bravely and firmly. Give yourself nothing to undo a little later; 'to form is easier than to reform,' the German philosopher tells us, and with the same thought in mind, the heroic Greeks left us this motto: 'The beginning is half of the whole.'—Hattie Louise Jerome in New York 'Observer.'

Rabbi Ben Karshook.

'Would a man 'scape the rod,'
Rabbi Ben Karshook saith,
'See that he turn to God
The day before his death.'

'Yet might a man inquire
When that would come,' I say.
The rabbi's eye flashed fire,
'Then, let him turn to-day.'

ROBERT BROWNING.