

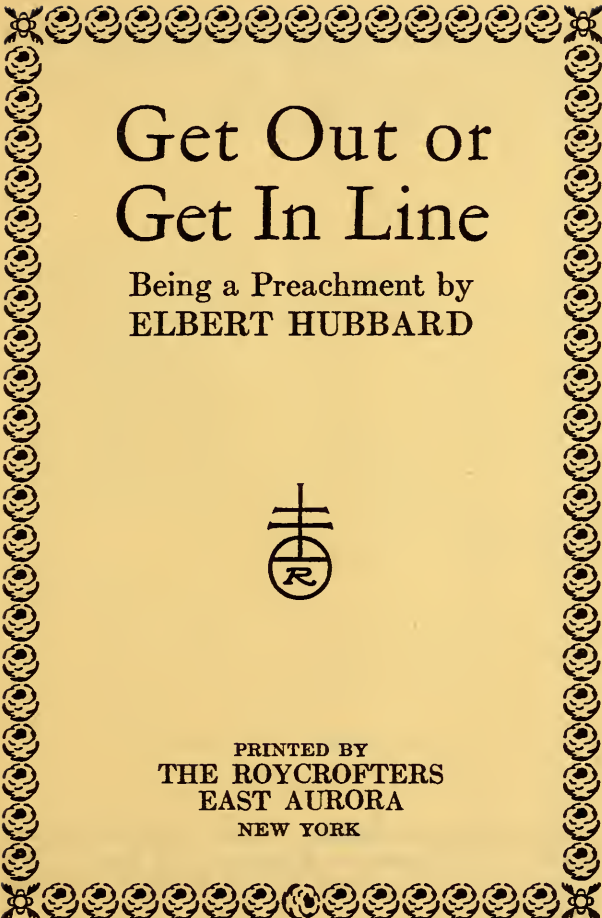
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# GET OUT OR GET IN LINE

BY  
ELBERT HUBBARD  
(FRM ELBERTVS)

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# Get Out or Get In Line

Being a Preachment by  
ELBERT HUBBARD



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## Get Out or Get In Line

**I**F all the letters, messages and speeches of Lincoln were destroyed, except that one letter to Hooker, we should have a good index to the heart of the Rail-Splitter ☞ ☞

In this letter we see that Lincoln ruled his own spirit; and we also behold the fact that he could rule others. The letter shows frankness, kindness, wit, tact, wise diplomacy and infinite patience.

Hooker had harshly and unjustly criticized Lincoln, his Commander-in-Chief, and he had embarrassed Burnside, his ranking officer. But Lincoln waives all this in deference to the virtues that he believes Hooker possesses, and promotes him to succeed Burnside. In other words, the man who had been wronged promotes the man who had wronged him, over the the head of a man whom the promotee had wronged and for whom the promoter had a warm personal friendship.

But all personal considerations were sunk in view of the end desired. Yet it was necessary that the man promoted should know

the truth, and Lincoln told it to him in a way that did not humiliate nor fire to foolish anger; but which certainly prevented the attack of cerebral elephantiasis to which Hooker was liable.

Perhaps we had better give the letter entire, and so here it is:

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, January 26, 1863

Major-General Hooker:

General: I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course, I have done this upon what appear to me to be sufficient reasons, and yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you.

I believe you to be a brave and skilful soldier, which, of course, I like.

I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right.

¶ You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable if not indispensable quality.

¶ You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm, but I think that during General Burnside's command of the army you have taken counsel of your ambition and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most meritorious and honorable brother officer.

I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the government needed a dictator. Of course, it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders. I much fear that the spirit you have aided to infuse into the army, of criticizing their commander and with-



holding confidence from him, will now turn upon you. I shall assist you as far as I can to put it down. Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it. And now, beware of rashness; beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories. Yours, very truly,

A. LINCOLN

One point in this letter is especially worth our consideration, for it suggests a condition that springs up like deadly nightshade from a poisonous soil. I refer to the habit of sneering, carping, grumbling at and criticizing those who are above us.

The man who is anybody and who does anything is surely going to be criticized, vilified and misunderstood. This is a part of the penalty

for greatness, and every great man understands it; and understands, too, that it is no proof of greatness. The final proof of greatness lies in being able to endure contumely without resentment. Lincoln did not resent criticism; he knew that every life must be its own excuse for being, but look how he calls Hooker's attention to the fact that the dissension Hooker has sown is going to return and plague him! "Neither you nor Napoleon, were he alive, could get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it." Hooker's fault falls on Hooker—others suffer, but Hooker suffers most of all.

Not long ago I met a Yale student,

home on a vacation. I am sure he did not represent the true Yale spirit, for he was full of criticism and bitterness toward the institution. President Hadley came in for his share, and I was supplied items, facts, data, with times and places, for a “peach of a roast.”

Very soon I saw the trouble was not with Yale, the trouble was with the young man. He had mentally dwelt on some trivial slights until he had got so out of harmony with the institution that he had lost the power to derive any benefit from it. Yale is not a perfect institution—a fact, I suppose, that President Hadley and most Yale men are quite willing to admit; but Yale

does supply certain advantages, and it depends upon the students whether they will avail themselves of these advantages or not.

If you are a student in a college, seize upon the good that is there. You get good by giving it. You gain by giving—so give sympathy and cheerful loyalty to the institution. Be proud of it. Stand by your teachers—they are doing the best they can. If the place is faulty, make it a better place by an example of cheerfully doing your work every day the best you can. Mind your own business.

If the concern where you are employed is all wrong, and the Old Man a curmudgeon, it may be well

for you to go to the Old Man and confidentially, quietly and kindly tell him that he is a curmudgeon. Explain to him that his policy is absurd and preposterous. Then show him how to reform his ways, and you might offer to take charge of the concern and cleanse it of its secret faults.

Do this, or if for any reason you should prefer not, then take your choice of these: Get Out or Get in Line. You have got to do one or the other—now make your choice.

If you work for a man, in heaven's name work for him!

If he pays you wages that supply you your bread and butter, work for him—speak well of him, think

well of him, stand by him and stand by the institution he represents.

¶ I think if I worked for a man I would work for him. I would not work for him a part of the time, and the rest of the time work against him. I would give an undivided service or none.

If put to the pinch, an ounce of loyalty is worth a pound of cleverness.

¶ If you must vilify, condemn and eternally disparage, why, resign your position and, when you are outside, damn to your heart's content. But, I pray you, so long as you are a part of an institution, do not condemn it. Not that you will injure the institution—not that—but when you disparage the

concern of which you are a part, you disparage yourself.

More than that, you are loosening the tendrils that hold you to the institution, and the first high wind that comes along, you will be uprooted and blown away in the blizzard's track—and probably you will never know why. The letter only says, "Times are dull and we regret there is not enough work," et cetera ☞ ☞

Everywhere you find those out-of-a-job fellows. Talk with them and you will find that they are full of railing, bitterness and condemnation. That was the trouble—through a spirit of fault-finding they got themselves swung around

so they blocked the channel, and had to be dynamited. They are out of harmony with the concern, and no longer being a help they had to be removed. Every employer is constantly looking for people who can help him; naturally he is on the outlook among his employees for those who do not help, and everything and everybody that is a hindrance has to go. This is the law of trade—do not find fault with it; it is founded on Nature. The reward is only for the man that helps, and in order to help you must have sympathy.

You can not help the Old Man so long as you are explaining in undertone and whisper, by gesture and



suggestion, by thought and mental attitude, that he is a curmudgeon and his system dead wrong. You are not necessarily menacing him by stirring up discontent and warming envy into strife, but you are doing this: You are getting yourself upon a wellgreased chute that will give you a quick ride down and out.

When you say to other employees that the Old Man is a curmudgeon, you reveal the fact that you are one; and when you tell that the policy of the institution is "rotten," you surely show that yours is. ¶ Hooker got his promotion even in spite of his failings: but the chances are that your employer

does not have the love that Lincoln had—the love that suffereth long and is kind. But even Lincoln could not protect Hooker forever. Hooker failed to do the work, and Lincoln had to try some one else. So there came a time when Hooker was superseded by a Silent Man, who criticized no one, railed at nobody—not even the enemy. And this Silent Man, who ruled his own spirit, took the cities. He minded his own business, and did the work that no man ever can do unless he gives absolute loyalty, perfect confidence and untiring devotion.

Let us mind our own business, and work for self by working for the good of all.



A Thought Once  
Expressed is a  
Bomb That Ex-  
plodes Indefinitely

