

*Letters of  
Father and Son*

DURING COLLEGE DAYS

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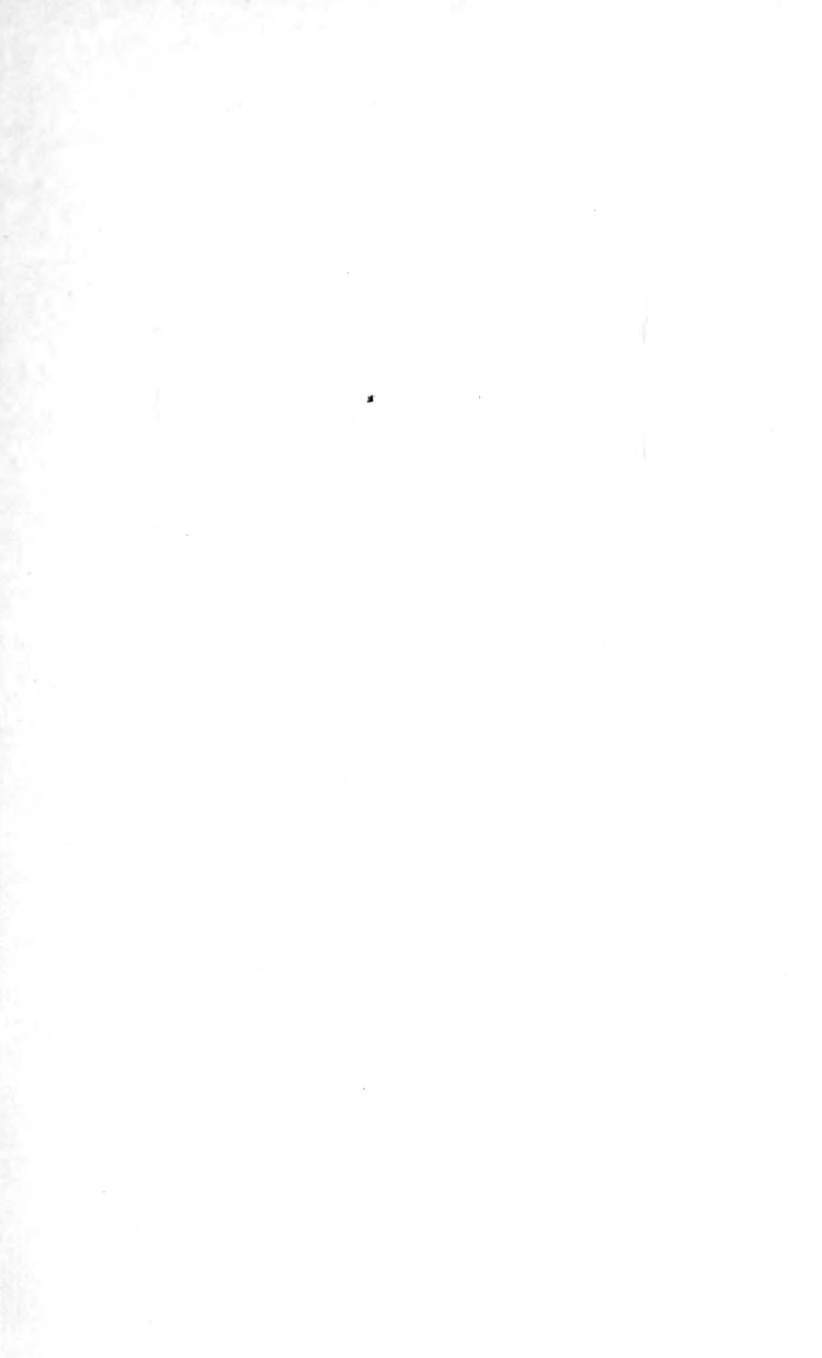
▪ JOHN DOUGLAS ADAM ▪

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FATHER AND SON

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By JOHN DOUGLAS ADAM

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LETTERS OF  
FATHER AND SON  
DURING COLLEGE DAYS

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By  
JOHN DOUGLAS ADAM  
*Author of "Religion and the  
Growing Mind"*



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## The Father's Letter

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### INTRODUCTORY

MY DEAR ARTHUR :

Memories of my own early college days mingle with my thoughts of you as you begin your work in the same familiar surroundings.

It has occurred to me that it might be profitable for both of us, if we were to write to each other upon some of the phases of your experiences which you would not discuss in the ordinary family correspondence. Of course, it would be strictly between ourselves. I am keen in my desire that these momentous years should bring to your promising life that large and full equipment which shall make you a strong and useful man.

You have the root of the matter in you. You have the vital force at the base of your nature, which should make it possible for you to assimilate into personal power all the influences which shall press in upon you.

You have permitted the eternal realities, which are playing upon the spirit of every man, to enter your spirit. A healthy tree deeply rooted in rich soil is able to gather the influence of rigorous changes of weather into its expanding life. And in the same way since you possess the secret of funda-

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## Introductory

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mental enrichment, you should be able to make every kind of experience which you shall encounter contribute to the expansion of your personality.

If you had not sufficient life force in your elemental being, if you did not possess the experimental knowledge by which truth may be turned into character, the various influences at work in the grand old place in which your lot is now cast, might weaken instead of strengthen you. If a tree cannot draw nourishment through its roots from the soil, the most advantageous climate will not save it from the blight of decay.

And it is through the operation of this principle that some men, in circumstances such as those in which you are now placed, are not strengthened but weakened; their character does not expand, it contracts.

The fault is not in their surroundings, it is in the lack of sufficient nutriment in the unseen depths of their inner life.

But if we take for granted the silent, continual, appropriation of the Divine spirit, freely available for all men, and we have spoken of this at length on previous occasions, then every advantage, every difficulty, in your surroundings should result in the development of a virile manhood.

But that is the crisis of the whole matter. It all depends upon whether there is power enough within the inner life to perform the function of assimilating

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## The Father's Letter

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all the tasks, and experiences, of every day, into moral and mental vigour. It is the sufficiency or insufficiency of that inner reserve of vitality, which determines the effect which discipline and trial shall have upon you.

It is for that reason the same set of circumstances makes one man strong and another man weak.

You are in a gymnasium for the expansion of the full range of your manhood, and it is for men who possess such culture the world is waiting, men whose whole nature has been deepened and broadened, by physical, mental, and moral discipline.

The entire world is on the verge, or in the process, of vast changes in every aspect of its life. There probably never was a time when so much of the thought of the world was in the melting pot.

The call for leaders, for pioneers, to blaze the trail, to stake out the new territory for the new humanity, becomes louder every day. Are you to have a part in the exhilarating movements of our time? That will, in part, depend upon whether you rise into a broad, massive, vigorous manhood.

Let nothing defeat your growth. Let no petty malice, no fear of the world, no churlish sneer, no mean revenge, have the ghost of a chance to canker the flowing sap of your rising enthusiasms. Let no mental or moral poisonous insect eat its way through the bark of your character.

You have a chance to take a part in the affairs of

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## Introductory

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what may be the most momentous period in the history of the world, an opportunity which courageous older men may well envy.

And when a man is about to enter into a great game, which tens of thousands are gathering to witness, he does not allow anything to handicap him in playing up to the last ounce of his capacity. All the world is drawing near, and closing round, to see the modern contest between contending ideas and forces.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## The Son's Letter

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### I

### GETTING STARTED

DEAR FATHER:

I have been taking comfort from the fact that even an express train does not start on its journey at the rate of sixty miles an hour. And I am not an express train; an accommodation train which stops at every station, and sometimes at the slightest provocation between stations, is more like my pace.

That promise which I made to you in my letter the other day, to take up your suggestion of a correspondence along the line you indicated, appears to me at this moment to have been a trifle rash. For there does not seem to be much to write about, of anything like thrilling importance.

However, your idea that we should privately discuss some of the things which are of real consequence in my life still appeals to me. And it appeals to me all the more because you have always been so reasonable with me; you have patiently tried to see things from my point of view to such a degree that I feel able to write to you as I could to no other.

And since you emphasized that what we say to

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## Getting Started

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each other shall be distinctly between ourselves, I have no reluctance on the score of appearing either priggish or sheepish. And whatever you may feel in your heart to say to me will always have a respectful hearing, for I have perfect confidence in your fairness, as well as a deep conviction of your devoted interest in all that concerns me.

But the difficulty still remains of having something of adequate importance upon which to write to you. For you stated distinctly that this correspondence is to be apart altogether from the ordinary family communications. So that I feel somewhat as if I were sitting in front of an examination paper which was too much for me.

The only way in which I can respond to your idea is to tell you quite frankly of the things which are most vividly in my mind. And the most vivid fact in my thoughts is that I miss you all horribly. It is terribly difficult to get up steam for my work. Everything in the direction of study is a good deal of a bore. I am restless. The free life of the glorious summer with my sailboat still calls me. When I sit down to work, it occurs to me just then that I must go out to buy something.

It is awfully hard to break myself in. Or to return to the idea of the accommodation train, it is not easy to climb the first steep grade of the railway. The wheels of my locomotive go round furiously enough, but they do not go forward satisfactorily.



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## The Father's Reply

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I suppose some sand must be let out so that the wheels may grip the rails. And perhaps you will play the part of a relief engine and give me a push up the hill till I reach the level stretch of country.

The line is all clear, and I hope to arrive on time. My associate, David Seton, is a capital fellow. He is not very talkative, but he has a quiet sense of humour which struggles bravely out of a reserved nature.

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR :

I have not the slightest doubt that the accommodation train will reach its destination on time. And if I can play the part of a relief engine, it is at your service ; not to push you too hard, but to help you to take the steep grades.

When I suggested this correspondence there was no idea in my mind of posing as the head-line of a copy-book which children are taught to imitate. It was rather the strong desire to keep up the comradeship between us, which is one of the most satisfying things in my life. I am keen to share all that interests you, as far as that is possible. And if I write to you with great frankness, it is not with any superior airs, but that you may have the benefit of my larger experience, for what it may be worth to you.

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## Getting Started

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I have made mistakes, many of them. And it is partly because of those mistakes that I may be of some use to you at the present stage of your life.

It is not the man who is standing on a hill who sees the hill ; it is the other man who is looking at it from some distance. And in the same way, it is perhaps possible for me to see your situation better than you can see it.

I like your illustration of starting like a train, for however slowly it may move, it is headed towards a definite point. And you know from your experience in sailing a small boat inshore without a compass, how important it is to keep the spot towards which you are steering steadily in your eye, otherwise your course is indirect.

My first word to you is to keep your goal clearly in view ; make it as vivid as possible to your mind.

Just as when one is about to build a house he has plans drawn, so draw a plan, as it were, of your educational house. We may consider the question of the furnishing of the house later on ; I mean by that the interior details of your mental and social life. And still later it will be important to discuss the use you shall make of it all, that is to say, the life-work which you may decide to take up.

In the meantime the important thing is to have a clear plan of the main sections of your present life. These, it seems to me, might be divided into four parts: work, recreation, friendship, and service.

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## The Father's Reply

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It is your privilege to give each of these aspects of your present opportunity its own legitimate place.

It would be comparatively easy to plan for any one of these, which might appeal to one's taste. And that is the temptation to which some surrender, partly because they do not keep a definite plan before their mind, and partly because they yield to inclination rather than to reason.

The purpose which is behind the university idea is the development of the whole man.

It is the combination of opportunities which is the genius of the place. One might pursue elsewhere any single phase of the culture which it offers.

So that you must guard against the over-emphasis of any one aspect. Keep the plan of your educational house symmetrical; have an eye for proportion. Of course, the central room is for study; that must have the most spacious opportunity. The idea of work must govern the whole scheme.

But the other sections of your life are not to be housed in a barn or a garage detached from the main structure. Nor must it be the other way about. Some few men make their educational house a mere club, social or athletic, while their study is a ramshackle barn, detached from their dwelling place.

You must bear in mind that the final result is

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## Getting Started

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not the production of a mental or physical, or social freak. The college idea is vindicated by the making of all round young manhood. Do not at any time allow yourself to become discouraged when you are outstripped in any one sphere of your efforts, if you have been faithful ; for, in the last analysis, it is the proportionate man who is the highest product of your present opportunity.

Your time for specializing has not yet arrived ; it will come soon enough.

Having definitely before your mind the idea of proportion in all your activities, it will require the continual exercise of clear thinking and of a tireless will to carry out the idea.

You will find all about you a variety of standards as to what proportionate living really means. You will be impelled by one set of men in one direction, and by another set in another direction. But your own judgment must act in this matter and not the judgment of any set. You are building your own house ; it is not being built for you by any group of men, however charming they may be. The need of our time is for men who dare to follow their own convictions when they know they are right.

You are not a schoolboy ; you have the large liberty of choice which belongs to a man. You are free to exercise the authority of your own sovereign reason. You are flung upon your own resources to an extraordinary degree. There are

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## The Father's Reply

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periods of your time in which you may do as you please. It would therefore be a huge mistake, having passed beyond the authority which was over your life as a boy, to merely exchange it for the authority of a company of your fellows.

It is not indifference on the part of the college authorities which leaves men so much to themselves; that liberty is part of the discipline of student life. It is part of the process by which men develop individuality, by which they are made strong and resourceful.

But while urging you to maintain the attitude of independent judgment in the arrangement of your life, I am far from trying to encourage an attitude of aloofness, or reserve towards your associates. That would be more than a mistake; it would be an injustice both to them and yourself. It would be a direct violation of the college spirit. You stand committed to independence and comradeship.

And you must determine where loyalty to your own judgment should end, and where loyalty to good fellowship should begin.

The line of demarcation is sometimes a very thin one, and one of your tasks is to discover where it lies.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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# The Influence of Study

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## II

### THE INFLUENCE OF STUDY

DEAR FATHER :

Why should study fill so large a place in my plan, especially the study of subjects which may be very remote from the actual duties that I shall probably encounter when I leave college ?

Many men, after they have finished their studies, feel that they must begin at the very foundation in the business which they enter. They confess to be as ignorant of the facts of business as an office boy who never saw a college. And this applies not only in commercial affairs ; even when a man goes into a profession he rarely carries all he has studied at college with him into his special sphere of investigation.

One often hears the utility of this or that study questioned or repudiated. And that may be one of the reasons why some students are not in the least serious over their work. They have not seen the reasonableness of it. They feel it to be something which they must get through in some way, like pushing through a thorny hedge. Or they may jump over it, or go round another way. So that instead of going on with the prescribed course,

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## The Son's Letter

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they either find other reading which is congenial to them, or become engrossed in some pursuit which is outside the pale of study altogether.

In this practical age it does not seem to me quite reasonable that one's mind should be made a grave in which the memories of ancient wise men and their subtle utterances are buried. As one thinks of the large number of college men who are now out in the world engrossed in its practical affairs, they appear to me to be carrying about with them a good deal of useless material. There are broken splinters of ancient knowledge on shelves of their mind like fossil specimens in a museum. It may be interesting to some people to have such a museum, but it is hardly a practical armoury from which to obtain weapons to make one's way in the world.

It does not seem to me that it is clear enough to many of us why we should be greatly in earnest to continue that sort of thing. One would like to know much more definitely than many of us do, wherein lies the true effectiveness of such study.

It may not have been so in your day, but I find that there is a silent protest in a great many minds concerning the reasonableness of it. But, of course, it is perhaps not often outwardly expressed, because there is no purpose served in talking about it.

The work has to be done, that is all there is about it, if one is to stay in the ranks.

But it seems a pity that more of us do not quite

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## The Influence of Study

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grasp the meaning of it. For there must be a larger meaning in it than appears, or men like yourself would not be so enthusiastic in your advocacy of it. And it would not have the sanction of so large a part of the intelligent world.

If the end in view were made clearer, more rational, to some of us, then there might be more respect, more seriousness, more enthusiasm, given to work which gets scant courtesy in some quarters.

Your affectionate son,  
ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

At one time in some prisons the prisoners were required to turn a crank thousands of times every day; the labour had no meaning, and that was part of the degrading punishment. Study without knowing the reason for engaging in it is also slavery. It is not only your privilege to know the reason for study, but it is your clear duty to have a vivid view of its meaning. Without that you can never obtain anything like the full benefit from your work. And since it is study which is to have the most spacious place in your present life-plan, I am glad you have raised the question of its meaning with such refreshing frankness.

Education means first and foremost the development of the powers of one's being. That is the



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## The Father's Reply

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meaning of the word. Education means to acquire the ability to think for oneself, to act with force and resource in difficult problems, to acquire a thirst for knowledge, and to obtain the broader outlook upon life.

Whatever form of mental enterprise achieves that result is vastly worth while. We must keep first things first. The supreme object in your present stage of life is the growth, the strengthening, the tempering of the elements of your being. The education of the will, the power to concentrate, the training of the imagination, the alert retentiveness of the memory, the fusion of the personality into a poised unity. These things are of far more value to you than the mere acquisition of knowledge. And when you are at that kind of work which has no apparent practical value, bear in mind that the educational value may be very great, nevertheless. Those men to whom you referred as having fragments of ancient knowledge in their minds which have no relation to their actual work in the world, if they were faithful, possess the mental power that came from the study of ancient knowledge. They are carrying into their business the concentration, the mental stability and breadth which they obtained from studies which may have had no commercial bearing upon their subsequent occupation.

But the scaffolding by which a building is put up is not a useless thing because it merely serves a

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## The Influence of Study

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temporary purpose. The permanent structure could not have been erected without it.

Of course, it is quite true that practical information and the development of the powers may be obtained at the same time. One may get an education through the study of those subjects which have a direct bearing upon one's work in the world. And here the educational world divides up into different camps, some contending that the education of the powers should be realized wholly through the study of practical subjects. While others contend that a higher, a finer type of culture can be obtained through giving an important place to the study of subjects which are not directly practical. There is much to be said for both views.

Your programme of study splits the difference, which is the correct method according to many experts. You have mostly practical subjects and some non-practical subjects; so that in your pursuit of education your method is quite abreast of the educational philosophy of our time.

From my point of view the important thing is that you should be able to assimilate into your personality all that you observe and study. You must have vigour enough in the depths of your nature to make what occupies your attention part of your personality. For it is possible to study without making what you study contribute to the making of your manhood.

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## The Father's Reply

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And in my judgment this is where education is inspired by spiritual reality. As the base of a man's nature is reinforced by his contact with eternal realities, his personality is so invigorated that he is able to make subjects which he works over part of his elemental self. What he studies is not external to his deepest self. It is not merely placed in a compartment of his being. It becomes part of the unified nature of the man, instead of being lodged in the intellectual department of his life like books on a shelf.

That is to say the great facts of the spiritual world, feeding the core of one's life, guarantee the assimilation of what one studies into the centre of his being. So that the fruit of study means more character, as well as more brain power. If one's religion is a vital energy flowing into his spirit, as I know yours is, then everything that is studied, everything that is done, is gathered into the unity of an expanding personality.

While on the other hand, if the roots of a life are not fed, it is possible for study to be nothing more than the quickening of the intellectual section of one's being. It does not reach, or enrich, the deeper life. It merely sharpens the wits, without strengthening the character. So that it becomes possible for one to grow in brain power, without growing in inner solidity and unity of nature. And such a person may become a dangerous char-

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## The Influence of Study

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acter, because he is developing his brain without uniting his brain to his conscience, without unifying his whole life. This is one of the perils of an education which ignores the spiritual in man. For it is the recognition that human life is at bottom a spiritual force, which tends to draw knowledge down into character, and puts character into knowledge. While knowledge without Divine life at its base is mere mental keenness, without being related to high motives, or ideals, for its shrewd actions. And a merely mentally shrewd, and mentally strong man may be the most mischievous person in a community or a nation.

Learn to assimilate what you study, make it part of your deepest self. Some men are not educated; they are tutored, they are crammed for examinations. They are artificially braced to jump over intellectual fences and then they relapse back into mental indolence. That is not true education. Education consists in the culture of the powers of one's being in such a way as to guarantee that the process begun in college shall go on naturally all through life.

In fact, the academic period only develops and teaches the use of the faculties, which must industriously engage in the pursuit of knowledge through all the subsequent years.

It is not what a college graduate knows that gives him his supreme advantage in the race of life,

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## The Father's Reply

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it is his ability to marshal the forces of his inner being, to face the problems which confront him with powers that have been disciplined by concentration and self-conquest.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## Concerning Recreation

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### III

#### CONCERNING RECREATION

DEAR FATHER:

You have really helped me to see that true education means the expansion of mind and character. And that any study which has the effect of producing that result is of the highest value.

I see more clearly than before that my present business is to achieve the development of my powers, rather than to put the supreme emphasis upon the acquisition of knowledge. That will be my inspiration as I try to plow through the tough, stony ground of some studies which are not congenial. Or to put it in the language of your game of golf, I shall win as many holes of knowledge as I can, but the main thing for the present will be to learn the proper use of the clubs, and to practice into the style of the game, and to get the exercise.

Speaking of exercise, I have been asked to join the university football team as half-back.

It was a great surprise, but I suppose that certain accidental performances of mine, of which you know something, have been talking on my behalf.

Of course, I am enormously pleased to be asked. What do you think of the idea? When I ask this

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## The Son's Letter

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question let me say quite frankly I am not so much asking your advice as your permission. I suppose advice is needed upon this matter as well as upon others. But it would not be quite straight for me to say that I am hungering for counsel on the subject.

But I am exceedingly anxious to have your approval. If you disapprove, of course the delightful invitation will be declined. But it will be a bitter disappointment. Because it is the one thing that I have been secretly hoping might come my way, although I have made no effort to secure the chance to play. You have made no objection in the past, but I can see you might think that in my present circumstances it would be better for me to decline. You have sometimes criticized what seemed to you the roughness of the game, and you have suspected that it drew men away from their studies to an extent that was unwarrantable. Besides, I know that mother has always been a trifle nervous about my engaging in the game, especially since Daisy told her she saw me carried off the field.

You know as much about football as I do, so there is no need for me to discuss the matter with you. You have always tried to see my point of view in everything, and there is nothing in which I am more concerned to have you see it than in the matter before us. But I leave my case in your hands without argument. All I ask is that before

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## Concerning Recreation

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you discuss it with mother, you will tell her your own judgment in the case. She always thinks your decision about right in everything. You told me before I came here that you would not try to coerce me in anything ; but it would be no real pleasure for me to follow up any line of my own in which I was conscious of the disapproval of mother and yourself.

I am particularly anxious to have you with me in this decision, and shall wait with as much patience as is possible to command in the circumstances.

Whatever you decide shall be final. There will be no attempt to make a further appeal. I have perfect confidence that you will give the matter the fair and large consideration which you give to everything else.

Your affectionate son,  
ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR :

I firmly believe that recreation should have a recognized place, and not a mere haphazard opportunity, in your educational plan. Physical efficiency has a direct influence upon mental and moral efficiency, as well as the other way about ; the two sides of life act and react upon each other. And the main reason why some men are failures is



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## The Father's Reply

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because they have not learned the art of the management of their bodies.

On general principles, I look upon football as a great game. But when it comes down to having you join the university team, and while I am gratified to know that you have been asked, objections begin to crop up in my mind.

You hit exactly upon the reasons for my reluctance. Without meaning to do it, perhaps without being conscious of it, one is tempted to neglect his intellectual work. The time required for practice tends to drive study into a corner.

Then, too, while the rules of the game have been considerably modified in recent years, it takes a long time for one to get hardened to it.

The knocks and kicks leave the body rather seedy for two or three months at the beginning of the season, until it gets braced up to the furious pace. And the reflex action of that aching physical condition is hard upon the habit of study.

At the same time, if one can be true to his work, while he is being physically toughened by the game, I believe the result may be a great increase of efficiency.

I mentioned the matter to your mother, and as you surmised, she objected. But we have been talking the matter over since and she has consented to leave it in our hands to decide. But she made me promise to state the reasons to you which I

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## Concerning Recreation

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gave to her in favour of the game, and also to make it clear to you that if your studies become threatened you will withdraw from playing.

My argument with your mother was that while it presented serious temptations to scamp your work, on the other hand if you were true to your work, while engaging in the game, you would become a stronger man in every way by the process.

In the life of a healthy youth there must be opportunities for physical daring and endurance, especially in a country like ours where there is no compulsory military service, and in an age when there is nothing compulsory to call out the reserves of physical power in the lives of young men in your circumstances.

Every rational challenge to the exercise of courage is part of the making of a man. And the difference between physical and moral courage is not always so real as it is often made to appear. At any rate, physical and moral courage act and react upon each other.

The habit of habitual hard exercise is a safety-valve through which energy escapes which might endanger the moral character if it had no wholesome, legitimate outlet. For the youth who has no enthusiastic, healthy hobby in the open air which tends to use up his surplus of animal force is in greater moral danger than those who have such a hobby.

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## The Father's Reply

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There is also an opportunity for the culture of enthusiasm through an honest use of the game. It helps a man to strike the elemental depths of his being. He feels the surge of those tides of reality within him which rise up from that zone in our human nature in which heroisms are born. There are too many people living in the thin, cold feelings of their superficial selves, who are tempted to look out cynically upon life because they have never let a genuine enthusiasm break through the hard upper crust of their personality, reaching the molten depths beneath, where alone the deep joys and satisfactions of life are felt. An hour of joyous elemental living should enrich the inner life. The overflow from the deep springs of the spirit should refresh the whole nature of a man. Any legitimate pursuit which saves a life from freezing over is to be welcomed, any honourable call to the powers of the whole man which keeps him in intimate touch with the deep, warm currents within him, must mean all round expansion.

The culture of personal initiative, the ability to decide in a moment how to act, without being paralyzed into confusion, is by no means the least of the advantages to be gained from playing the game.

The discipline of the judgment into rapid, cool, concentrated action, instead of sluggish indecision and uncertainty, is an enormous asset in life, and it is wisdom not to lose sight of the fact that the foot-

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## Concerning Recreation

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ball field may greatly aid in the production of so important a result. And it may teach a man self-control when nothing else could succeed; to be compelled by opponents, by a watching, critical crowd, to play the game fairly in hot, tense moments when the whole nature of a man is in the lightning rush is a terrible strain. And if one can come through the ordeal with a clean sense of fairness, he has packed weeks of ordinary self-management into an hour of triumphant self-discipline.

Besides, the straight player learns, under a rod of iron, to remember that the whole team is the unit. He must, like clockwork, subordinate himself and his impulses to the making of the fortunes of his side. Solidarity is the watchword. There is no quarter for mere personal inclination, or pig-headedness. Every muscle and motion must bend to the common struggle. And it is safe to say that not much would be left of the self-willed bearing, and spirit, of any mother's spoiled boy, if he should happen to get on to the field to engage in a good, hard, game of football. If one or two young fellows, whom I have met, had passed through some such experience it would have lifted a fatal handicap from their career, and it would have saved their social circle from the unnecessary annoyance of being invaded by the self-centred behaviour of undisciplined natures.

These were some of the reasons I advanced to

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## The Father's Reply

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your mother for my measured willingness that you should join the university team. Of course, there are dangers to be avoided. I am thinking now of a man who was the most distinguished athlete of my time. While he has a magnificent physique, he has told me more than once that he has been handicapped by a weak heart ever since his college days. His muscles are like steel ropes, but his organs have been weakened. And as a result he cannot do anything like the amount of work some other men can do, who were much less brilliant athletes than he. That is the risk, and one must bear it steadily in mind. But there are risks in crossing the street. Hundreds of people are killed in London and New York every year in the attempt to cross the road. But the deduction from that is not that we must always walk on the same side of the street.

Before I close, let me remind you to be prepared for the inevitable reaction after a game. As you never let the kick of the gun blacken your shoulder, after you have fired a shot, never let the recoil of your nature after a furious game stain your conscience.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## Making Friends

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### IV

### MAKING FRIENDS

DEAR FATHER:

You are more than kind in having taken pains to explain to mother the legitimate and valuable place football may have in the making of a man. It is a great satisfaction that I may accept the offer made to me, with her and your own consent. And your letter gives me a more complete sense of the reasonableness and educational value of the game. I was not particularly keen upon that aspect of the situation, but you have helped me to see that it is possible to try to work one's ideals into that phase of my life as well as into study. And if the thing is done honourably, to get as much out of the one sphere of effort, in its own way, as out of the other sphere. I promise you if my studies are threatened to give up playing.

I am fortunate in coming across some unusually fine men here. David Seton and I are becoming more and more congenial. His personality grows upon me. I have met so many who impress me as clean cut, straight fellows. Of course, I have not seen much of any of them, but the impression they have made upon me is most favourable. I suppose

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## The Son's Letter

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one ought to be somewhat careful before he enters into close association with men whom he has not previously known, lest it should appear later that he was withdrawing from an intimacy into which he had rashly entered. That would be awkward and unpleasant all round. I have determined for a time not to rush at attractive men who make kindly overtures to me. While my natural impulse is to plunge right into associations with some of them, it seems more just both to them, and to myself, to approach them very slowly. For it does not seem quite right to become intimate with a man, having him come to one's room, and walking with him, and then to drop the intimacy for no other reason than that one finds out some idiosyncrasy which makes it plain that we could not get along congenially together.

If he were a sensitive person he might think of all sorts of imaginary and erroneous reasons for the suspension of friendly overtures, whereas nothing had taken place except an undue haste in forming the acquaintance up to that point. And the injustice of which I should be guilty by so doing, might in the same way be visited upon myself. With my temperament, it would be a trial to be dropped by one whose good-will I cared for, without knowing the reason for it, while I imagined every kind of a reason except the right one, the only cause being that the previous association was

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## Making Friends

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premature. An experience of that kind would drive me back upon myself and break my confidence in myself among my fellows. For I have an absolute horror of pushing myself forward.

I wish to have a genial bearing towards everybody with whom I come in contact, at the same time putting a curb upon my impetuous nature which would urge me to make a friend of every whole-souled fellow who makes advances to me.

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

Your attitude towards the men among whom you are now living, of which you write, is one of the greatest importance in your present and future career. It forms a vital part of your education. As you are able to carry yourself among your fellows with kindness, tact, courage, and breadth of view, so will you be able to make your life count in whatever sphere you may enter. The man who does not cultivate sincere and genial relations with men, not only cuts himself off from the most satisfying experiences in life, but he puts serious limitations upon his usefulness in the world.

I heartily agree that you should go very slowly in this matter, however. But you must see to it



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## The Father's Reply

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that your carefulness does not chill the warm impulses of your heart. I know you well enough to believe that you would never become a cold, or calculating, worldling in the choice of your friends. Where the attitude of seeking personal advantage dominates a life in making friends, there the possibility of friendship is dwarfed into something which is only the mimicry of friendship.

Recognize clearly at the outset, the difference between acquaintanceship and friendship. One's life ought to be so true and poised that he can enter cordially into contact with all kinds of people. And there need be no limitation upon the number of those with whom he associates in a general way. In fact, the larger the number with whom one trains himself to mingle in a human, gracious manner, without surrendering his convictions or his self-respect, the richer will be the reflex action upon his own personality. Some personalities are starved through the lack of natural contact with the world.

One must never expect to find every man with whom he comes into casual association belonging to the type which he delights in meeting. And because the world is made up of all sorts of people, it would be disastrous to shut oneself off from all those in the world who are not congenial. It would not only impoverish one's own personality, but it would be an evidence of selfishness and

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## Making Friends

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conceit. Why should we judge everybody by our standard? Why should we frown upon our fellows who do not conform to our estimates? That is the essence of narrowness, and it tends to harden one's heart, which is more than a mistake, it is a tragedy. We must train ourselves to feel kindly towards every man. And it is not enough to feel it, we must learn the art of making our feeling evident.

That is an artistic aspect in the making of a man which we dare not neglect. It is not insincere, it is not beneath a manly man, to endeavour to translate kindly feeling into a gracious bearing. It is of the utmost importance, if we are to make our full contribution to the common good. It is an essential part of true manliness to take pains to establish a workable point of contact with the whole world. And if we do not feel kindly, we must simply learn to subdue the unkindly impulses which have usurped the place of a gracious attitude.

But when we turn to friendship, we describe a much smaller circle, and it is a debatable question as to how small or large it should be. One thing is certain, there must be an inner circle of friendship; while we try to meet all men with good-will, we have a special place for a chosen number. One of the temptations of our time in the lives of many is to have a vast number of acquaintances and no friends, the reason for this often being they are too eager upon the next thing, the next

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## The Father's Reply

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advantage, the next conquest, to have time to cultivate what they have already received.

Friendship is a beautiful flower and it requires careful rearing. It will not grow in all soils, and it will not blossom if it has not a clear, open space given to it in the garden of life, nor will it be fragrant if it is forced in a hothouse of feverish hurry. It is at your time of life you must cultivate friendship, so that in later years the friendships made now will live upon the common past experiences of youthful association. A common past of youthful memories is the soil in which the rose of friendship thrives best. You will find in middle life that those bonds which are most real to you were made in your earlier years. As you grow older the capacity for making friendships will contract, and they ordinarily will not have the same vigour and depth as those which were begun during your college days. The present is your sowing time for friendship and the later years will bring you the harvest. This is the general principle. Of course, there are exceptions even to such a principle.

The first fact in the growth of friendship is to have something worthy to offer. It is to be true in the core of one's own being, to be true to oneself in every particular. For friendship is self-giving. And if there is to be a harvest, the seed that is sown must be sound, incorruptible.

After personal genuineness, the supreme motive

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## Making Friends

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must be to give something rather than to receive. Friendship does not grow by feeding upon its rights, but through being inspired by its opportunities of service.

You must be slow to give yourself until you feel that the bond is being formed naturally. For true friendship will not be hurried, and to be impatiently too eager is simply to behave like the child who digs up the seed out of the ground to see if it is growing. The hurried act has arrested the growth. Let sound intuition rather than hasty impulse guide you. For while warm impulses are not to be condensed into coldness, they must be regulated into steadiness.

Your deeper intuitions will inform you whether your overture is welcome, and they will urge leisureliness of approach. Bear in mind hurry is a blight upon friendship at every stage. Hurry lives in the future rather than in the present, and is disrespectful towards the past; it agitates, and vulgarizes the inner life. And consequently it cuts at the psychological roots of the tender growth which it is anxious to see in premature blossom.

Personally I have not cultivated a great number of close friendships. But I have endeavoured to give some time to my friends. And I feel that no man has been more richly blessed. Friendship requires thoughtful attention in order to experience it at its best; it is therefore in the nature of the

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## The Father's Reply

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case, as I see it, impossible to bestow the consideration which it demands over an immense circle. But every man must decide that point for himself, and it depends upon what one means by friendship.

My experience of its meaning is a man to whom I may tell anything, and he will never throw it back in my face. One who will not take immediate offence, or become resentful of an apparent neglect, trust being dominant rather than suspicion. One who never hurts the feelings by veiled disloyalty. One who in the spirit of great kindness has told me of faults which I should not have discovered had it not been for his courageous fidelity. One with whom I need never be on my guard.

To play the part of a friend we must know the meaning of loyalty. There will be no confidential complaints to a third party concerning our friend. He may hear all we have ever said about him without ill-feeling. Even when we may not quite understand his action, we must not change our attitude towards him. True friendship does not live in the spirit of tit for tat, either openly or secretly. One is sometimes terribly tempted to live on this principle, but to surrender to the temptation means the decay of the tender growth. There will be moments of frank, plain speaking, but the friendly spirit will save the situation from disaster. But even when the frank utterance is resented by the other man, one may always remain true in

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## Making Friends

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one's spirit to him. If a friend should cease to remain a friend, see to it that you do not let the milk of human kindness in your heart become soured by the thunder-storm of unbridled anger. Do not allow mean and bitter thoughts of revenge to have any quarter in your mind. That is the natural history of a narrowing soul. No man can experience the highest meaning of happiness who lives on that level of life. Besides, such a spirit throws one out of human touch with others than those towards whom he feels bitterly. For when one encourages a mean spirit towards any man, he has weakened his relationship towards every man, through self-injury.

Never allow yourself to feel or act so that the renewal of what has been broken has been made permanently impossible.

Give your friends of your best. Because restraint may be relaxed in their presence, that does not imply that they have not clear rights to the good manners which the world demands.

Friendships have been jeopardized by carelessness, as well as by tragic misunderstandings.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## The Son's Letter

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### V

#### SOCIAL SERVICE

DEAR FATHER :

Your letter confirms me in my judgment that it is best to go slowly in the making of friendships. And I shall not forget the distinction between acquaintanceship and friendship, and what I owe to both.

I have been asked, with some other fellows, to take a hand in helping on a boy scout movement among the lads of the town. The idea was quite new to me; but since reading something about it, it seems a remarkably sensible scheme. The purpose of the organization, which has grown into large proportions in England, in the United States, and in other countries, is for the purpose of engaging the growing lad in healthy, open air, manly games, and pursuits in the comradeship of his fellows. It is to secure his attention from mere loafing, or irregular play, and to direct his enthusiasm into such channels of useful and wholesome enterprise as would naturally appeal to him. It encourages an interest in organization, in law and order, in life in the open, in tramping, camping, camp cooking. It provides an opportunity for the accurate obser-

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## Social Service

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vation of plants and birds, and for telling the story of what is observed. The spirit of the movement is emphatically in the direction of manliness, self-control, brotherhood and patriotism.

The whole thing is a revelation to me; it opens up so many avenues of endeavour for the boy who has really nothing worthy to occupy his spare time, as he roams about the streets with his companions, no one so far as I know having hitherto thought through, in an adequate way, the problem of capturing his latent enthusiasm for wholesome and uplifting ends.

This movement should not only mean a new era of opportunity for the boy whose club-house is the street corner, but it should also mean a new type of opportunity for young men like myself, to throw their interest into a sensible, human, brotherly cause for giving genuine help to those in less fortunate circumstances. I am not talking patronizingly, not by any means, for I can readily see that this opportunity will do far more for me than any good I can do, if I should become an officer in the local corps.

Even the thought of the work gives one a new zest in living. For it provides a rare chance to get close to boys at their own game. And the democratic comradeship which it makes possible is just the very thing that thousands of fellows like myself have been hungering for. Men have often talked



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## The Father's Reply

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with me about finding some real and human point of contact with one's fellows of another class, without stilted and artificial reserves, where enthusiasm over common pursuits would wipe out all lines of social demarcation. The boy scout idea, so far as I am able to see, is a stroke of genius in this, and in other directions. I believe it is destined to help on the democratic movement in the best possible way, by helping each to get the point of view of the other, by clearing up misunderstandings which have been born of ignorance, by revealing how much real talent has lain hidden in many lives which has not been called out.

Your affectionate son,  
ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

While I am convinced that service should form part of your plan of education, it cannot, in the nature of the case, have much of your time.

In fact, I do not see that it need claim a great deal of your attention. Perhaps a couple of hours a week would be all that you could possibly give to it.

What I like about the idea is the recognition of the principle of social service. It is not the amount of assistance which you are at present able to render which is the important point. It is that you should

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## Social Service

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begin to weave the principle of service into your character. Even if you were only able to give half an hour of your time weekly, my contention is that there is a far-reaching educational value in such an attitude towards society.

Good causes suffer greatly because some people think it is not worth while to offer a little of their time, or a very little money. And those people suffer as well as the causes. Because they are leaving one of the most enriching of opportunities out of their education.

Young men at your age ought to have the habit of serving, and of giving money, inculcated as a part of a liberal education. Tossing a coin to a cause, without the recognition of some principle by which it is done, is both an insult to the cause, and an injustice to the highest interests of the individual himself.

The culture of the heart is quite as necessary as the culture of the mind, or of the body, or of the social instincts. And it should not be postponed until later in life. I do not see why a college student should not begin to have an unselfish interest in the problems confronting society, as well as a man in middle life. The reason why so many older men have no interest in, or aptitude for, social service is because they had no training in that direction in their youth.

There may be a great danger in student life to

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## The Father's Reply

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limit one's interests to those things which concern students, while the life of the outside community is allowed to go on its own way. But it seems to me the town should receive more benefit than a financial one from the presence of a large body of young men preparing for places of leadership throughout the country. Some moral injury is occasionally done to the community through the social irregularities of a comparatively small number of college men. Such injury must be offset, so far as it is possible, by the moral enterprise of other students of a different type. The debt which earnest college men owe the community is a very real one, even although the community does not press for payment. It would be a terrible indictment, if it were true, that the presence of students in a town tends to make that town worse than it would otherwise be. I do not believe that such is the case. But it might be the case if straight, clean men did not endeavour to offset the wrong done by weak and selfish men.

So that I feel very strongly that young men, having convictions such as you possess, owe it to the community to take a hand in helping forward the cause of progress in some form or another. And you owe it to yourself. It is a distinct part of your preparation for larger efforts. Social service is something for which we should all be trained in heart and head in our youthful years.

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## Social Service

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It appears to me a false view of happiness when a parent says of his son that he should not be troubled with the cares of the world in his youth, that there will be plenty of time later for such concerns. That son might find some of the happiest experiences of his life in definite social effort ; it would help him out of himself in the most effectual way.

If a parent brings up his son only to think of his own advantage and pleasure, he has himself to blame if the pleasure-loving, soft temper in his son develops into insufferable selfishness. It sometimes happens that a youth's life hardens into an alarming indifference to the feelings and interests of other people, his family included, simply because he was encouraged to always consider himself alone. The motive in the indulgent parent's heart was to give his son a good time before the more difficult days should come, whereas he was in reality preparing his son for defeat at the hands of the stern facts of life by soft indulgence.

The practical education of heart and mind through some form of social service, will in some measure guarantee the preservation of those enthusiasms which keep the spirit from being suffocated, or bored, by mere creature comfort, and conventional living.

Besides, if one is not trained early in life to cultivate an intelligent interest in the welfare of others, his formal interest in philanthropic causes in later years may be no sign whatever of a genuine love

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## The Father's Reply

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for humanity. It is quite possible for the heart to have become hard, even while the mind may be engaged in human problems in a professional way. Every humanitarian is not necessarily humane.

I am thankful, therefore, that an opportunity has presented itself to you at this stage of your career to come into contact with one of the vital problems of society. And the opportunity which is before you is one of the very best in which you could engage. For, as you have said, it will bring you into touch with the problems of youth, of the poor, of democracy. It will widen your outlook; you will obtain insight into a larger world than the sphere in which you live. And this is of enormous value, for not only are many men of your class ignorant of the conditions under which the vast majority live, but they are unconscious of the reality, the manliness, the intelligence, which are hidden behind the sometimes drab exterior of the surroundings of the toiling poor. And if we are to enter upon a new day of social solidarity, it must come through a deeper mutual understanding. The narrow, insular point of view of many so-called educated and cultivated people, must give place to more cosmopolitan sympathies. Cultivate the broad outlook upon the world. Learn to appreciate merit wherever it is, whether in one class or another, in one nation or another, in one good cause or another. I hope you will always be intensely patriotic, but

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## Social Service

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never blinded by a narrow prejudice, which shuts out the rest of the world as of little or no importance, because it does not happen to be that small part of the world which you know.

But having said all this in favour of your taking a hand in the work which has been offered to you, let me emphasize that you dare not get too deep into it at present. Your studies are first. It is only as you are true to your immediate work that you can present a true manhood to any other cause. All progress must be from the centre to the circumference. Guard against the subtle temptation to substitute industry in a sphere which may be congenial, for application in the sphere of study which may be at times not so congenial. If you go down to work among the boys, when in your inmost heart you know you ought to be at your books, you fail to ring true. Others may not detect it, but your own conscience becomes witness to the fact that by so doing you have chosen the point of least resistance. And no amount of plausible argument can alter the situation. Every hour has its supreme duty, and it is our business with an open mind, and a courageous will, to get into grips with that duty, for we are not wholly true men till we face our second task with the power which we have received from victory in the one nearest at hand.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## The Son's Letter

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### VI

### A MARGIN OF TIME

DEAR FATHER :

I think the four aspects of my education plan are clearly before my mind. But I am beginning to find out already the difficulty of getting everything into my programme in anything like an orderly manner. I am not a particularly punctual person. It was only on Friday afternoon that a plan for a walk into the country fell through because I was late for the engagement. It was discovered that we could not reach our destination in time to carry out a proposed visit to Seton's cousin, and catch the only suitable train back.

I could see that Seton was somewhat nettled over my unpunctuality, because he had arranged with his cousin that we should reach his house at a certain time, and he had to telegraph that the arrangement could not be put through.

He was very nice about it, but his accustomed good humour had a hard struggle with a perfectly natural feeling of irritation.

I was in the gymnasium and forgot the flight of time. The usual excuse. It is not only the habit of punctuality which I would like to cultivate, but of being punctual, without making a fuss over it.

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## A Margin of Time

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I have seen men who try to be punctual, but they do it in a cyclone of excitement. I would really like to meet my appointments promptly, but without doing it to the tune of banging bureau drawers, and slamming doors.

I do not care to live the life of a slave to my watch, and of being always out of breath in the process. You may remember a half-witted man whom we boys called "Trotting Bob." He was always on the run, banging into people full tilt, and I suppose he was only on his way to buy a box of matches. I do not care to be punctual in any such fashion. Reuben Saunders always provoked me when he wrote to me at school by signing his letters "Yours in haste." One wondered what in all the world he had to hurry about. Others have told me he exhibited the same nervous hurry when he called on them. He was always going somewhere else.

I suppose that sort of thing gets to be a habit, and a habit which is kept up even when there is no occasion for it. And no doubt it proceeds from a mental attitude, hurrying to the next thing, before the thing in hand is half done. The things which must be attended to during the day demand the habit of punctuality in my life, but as it appears to me, leisurely punctuality is the habit which is most desirable, the ability to keep the bearing of the football rush out of common life, the knack of



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## The Father's Reply

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being on time, without letting people know that it has been a life and death struggle to do it.

I would like to come down to breakfast as if I had had hours in which to get ready. I would like to sit talking with a man in his room with an atmosphere of composure and interest which would indicate that there was nothing else in the world for me to do. And in the same way to work hard at my studies without carrying about with me the odour of the midnight lamp. My desire is to be on time for everything, but to do it in such a way that shall not create the provoking and silly impression that I had to be something of a martyr in order to achieve it.

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

The importance of being on time did not powerfully come home to me till I was twenty-eight years old, and I heartily wish the lesson had come my way at your age. Without going into specific details, the rebuke which was administered to me with some effect was most graciously done by a great man whom I had kept waiting. In the kindest, quietest way possible, he showed me what disorganization I had brought into his forenoon by my action. That interview sent me away with a

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## A Margin of Time

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burning hot operation going on in my mind, and it burnt its way into my penitent soul. Like everybody else I had believed, on general principles, that unpunctuality was a nuisance, but the idea had not a definite grip upon my conduct. However, on that memorable day, I saw the selfishness, the impertinence, of not being promptly on time.

One has simply to consider for a few moments to see that the habit amounts to theft; our lack of consideration may steal the time of people who have not a minute to spare. It would sometimes not hurt them nearly so much if we stole their money. Besides, it is a stab at the legitimate dignity of other men when we do not meet them at the exact time for which the engagement was made.

We criticise people for being tempted to lose their temper, but it often is one's own thoughtlessness which created their temptation. It is the unpunctual person who is occasionally responsible for upsetting both the plans and the tranquillity of a whole household, or a company of friends. Because the habit is not looked upon as such a dreadful thing as lying or swearing, it is allowed to run rampant without rebuke amongst people who consider themselves quite correct.

Nevertheless, unpunctuality is a gross social injustice. One could not make some men angrier if he struck them in the face, than he can succeed in

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## The Father's Reply

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doing by keeping them waiting after the agreed time. And while a frank and humble confession of one's failing is something, it does not give back the other man his lost time, or perhaps his lost temper, or his lost train, or his lost lunch.

Unpunctuality is one of the most prevalent impertinences in our modern social life; all classes of people are offenders, religious and irreligious, young and old, wise and unwise. For punctuality means to be on the minute and to make sacrifices in order to do it.

And that requires not only a good watch in the pocket, but also a good one in the head.

And the practice has to do not only with engagements; it applies to promptness in answering letters, the lack of which is sometimes a miserable form of cruelty. Its application also touches the matter of prompt payment of our bills.

We owe the principle of punctuality not only to the world, but to ourselves, and to our own work. Without a rigorous economy of time one constantly finds himself in a muddle, thinking he has far more to do than he really has, while the people who are doing the world's work are those who have learned to find time by economizing it.

But I recognize the sanity of the point which you make in regard to leisurely punctuality—the attempt to be punctual, and yet to give no suggestion to others of hurry, and heat; to open

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## A Margin of Time

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the door on the minute, and yet not to bring in a wind-storm which tends to send everything flying at the same time. Leisurely punctuality introduces the subject of margins of time, as one strives to have a margin in a bank account. Margins of time in the life of a day act like oil on machinery. Insufficient oil may cause a hot-box on a train and hold up everything on the line, and an insufficient margin of time may work in the same way upon the train of one's engagements.

One should plan for the margin, especially in the morning. If one can begin the day in a leisurely fashion, the rhythm of leisureliness may go on through the day. It is like starting a song on the right key. The question of a margin of time between the hour of getting up and breakfast is a matter of sufficient importance to command sound thinking. There should be a margin broad enough to permit everything being done that one ought to do in that section of the day, without hurry or omission. One should have ample time to dress, and to dress so as to be ready for the day, not the unshaven, slovenly, hurried approach to the breakfast table which is an affront to others, as it is a lack of respect towards oneself. One should have time for private devotions which are not hurried into a meaningless repetition of words, which is a mere caricature of religion. But I am convinced I need not counsel you on this matter. The morning

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## The Father's Reply

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margin should give one's life the accent, the tone, the pace, for the day.

I would not venture to say how much time you should allow for your margin. You know what my habit is, but I would not think of trying to force it upon you.

The important thing is that you should not be driven in anything you do. You should begin the day in that leisurely way in which I saw the champion ten mile runner of the world start in a contest. His easy, unstrained beginning of the race, while it looked like a disappointment from the spectator's point of view, was in part the secret of his victory.

Concentrate the mind upon the thing in which you are for the moment engaged as you begin the day, not upon the things which are coming on afterwards. Keep your imagination off the newspaper, or from the letters, or breakfast, for if you let your mind fix itself upon the events which have not yet been reached, you will find yourself hurrying towards those things.

They will capture your thoughts from the things in which you are engaged, and rush you through them in spite of yourself. The meaning and purpose of the margin of time will be spoiled by a hurrying mental attitude. It is not a period for indolence, for mere dreaming, but it provides the opportunity for a leisurely, self-possessed approach to the day's work.

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## A Margin of Time

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The margin idea should have a place at other times of the day besides the morning and in other concerns besides the matter of time. It is a principle which should have a recognized place in the use of money, and of one's physical strength. There should be a margin in character, in the sense of moral strength and depth, reserves which have not been called out. It is the margin idea in character which is one of the fundamental secrets of genuine influence with men. The world instinctively feels it when there is a latent force in a man which has not been expressed, a solid reserve fund of moral capital, which may be called upon in a time of emergency.

And when such a man comes calmly to his appointments on the minute, giving out all unconsciously the sense of a deep hidden reserve of strength slumbering till a crisis summons it, you are face to face with a leader of men.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## The Son's Letter

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### VII

#### THE MEANING OF LIFE

DEAR FATHER :

I like the margin idea, and shall endeavour to give it a place in the arrangement of my time. But after all, what is the aim beyond the margin, beyond the various spheres of activity which should engage my attention? What are my efforts driving towards? One constantly sees splendid motor cars splendidly driven at high speed, but one asks where they are going. Sometimes the people who are in the cars could hardly answer that question. They know they have a fine turnout, and they are bowling along at an exhilarating pace, but while they are in a great hurry, and everybody gets out of their way, they are often not going anywhere in particular. They are not on an errand anything like as important as would appear from the dust they raise. Is my case like that?

I want to carry the rational idea farther than into the spheres of my activity, and into the method of approach to those spheres. I desire to have a clear end in view, to have the feeling that the whole thing is really worth while. That my automobile, as it were, is going to some point in particular, and

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## The Meaning of Life

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that it is gloriously worth while getting there. I do not wish merely to be in a procession of motor cars, trying to get ahead of the others, on the road to nowhere.

Without meaning to be censorious, or priggish, one sees so many decent people playing a game that does not seem to have much common sense in it. There is cleverness and breadth of interest in it, but there does not appear to be any aim beyond the thing itself. One realizes this as he watches life as it is lived, when he talks with people ; it is perfectly plain as one reads the newspapers. There are wonderful inventions ; a vast conquest in scientific knowledge has taken place. Life has been made so much more comfortable in many directions. Books are cheap, everybody reads something, everybody is in the act of going somewhere else, and more quickly than ever. But what I want to know is, what is it all about ? Is the end in view any clearer, is the motive for reaching the end a rational one ? Is this thing which we call modern civilization really as glorious a thing as it is cracked up to be ? For myself, I often have my doubts. And especially when so many different theories of everything are contending like wrestlers in a ring.

Even here, you would be astonished if you were to listen to the differences of view expressed upon almost everything. And yet after all the differences have been expressed, everybody unites in doing



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## The Father's Reply

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the same things over again as if there had been no difference of sentiment whatever. Looking at the situation from the outside one would think that everything was going on in the same old way. But it is only in appearance. There are questionings beneath the surface, there are silent indications of some kind of change going on. But that is too much of a problem for me. I shall be content for the present if I can put reality into the end I have in view, not merely in regard to my studies, but in regard to my life. You said my education is for the development of my personality: but what is the development of my personality for?

Your affectionate son,  
ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

The development of your personality is for the purpose of carrying out a higher end than you and I know. We are part of a great plan; there is a progressive aim at work in the world. That plan is too vast for any of us to see it steadily or to see it whole.

It is a scheme which stretches out over the whole world, and throughout all time.

We catch glimpses of it, occasionally, as we catch glimpses of a landscape at night during flashes of

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## The Meaning of Life

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lightning. We see the progressive movement working its way through the pages of history. In our own time we feel the surge of its tide in the movements of social unrest and change.

Sometimes a prophetic character interprets meaning out of the confusion, and noise, and strife, and enterprise of the world. He makes clear the destiny of a nation, of a race; he summons the individual to see his place in the cosmic plan.

You and I are to try to fit our lives into the vast progressive plan which is being unfolded by the Divine mind. It is for us to bring ourselves into such an attitude of heart and mind as to be able to understand our marching orders. To be able to interpret the whispers from the eternal world which we may hear if we listen attentively. It is in the quiet of our willing souls we hear those whispers of that message which gives our life its true aim and direction, rather than in the noise and opposing utterances which we hear in the world.

It is this inner assurance which has given all great and true men their fearless independence. It is their sense of having become obedient to a summons which they have heard in their highest moments of self-effacement which has given them directness and simplicity of purpose. While others have been lost in confusion, and broken by discouragement, they have kept on their way sometimes amidst criticism and misunderstanding. But their consolation

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## The Father's Reply

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and inspiration have come to them in the consciousness of having in some measure risen to the challenge of God for their lives.

And in course of time the world has awakened to see that those men were the pathfinders of its progressive life. The world has discovered that they were original contributors to progress, simply because they listened to the voice of Him who is Himself directing the campaign of progress on this planet.

It is because there is a Divine plan for our lives which we may grasp, that you and I engage in our private devotions. It is because there is a distinct and specific place which you and I may fill that we wait quietly morning by morning in the secret place of prayer. We are listening for the voice. We are listening for that voice to interpret for us the babel of voices which ascend from the world, and which we cannot understand, except as the spirit of God makes the meaning clear to us.

The acts of our devotional life are not attempts to placate the Almighty. They are not mere weak overtures for favours to descend upon us. They are not self-complacent acts of superstitious futility. When we pray, when we read the Bible in the quiet of the morning, we are trying to bring our natures into that zone of spiritual reality where the voice of the spirit of God may be heard calling us to play our part, the part He has for us to play.

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## The Meaning of Life

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Not any part, but to enter into our own distinct place in the ranks of the marching thousand millions, who are passing on to give place to two thousand millions more who shall have their little day of opportunity to try to rise to their destiny.

It is a sublime chance which we have day by day, this waiting upon God.

The idea has been cheapened, and degraded, and made ridiculous, in the eyes of the world by narrow, and conventional, and barbaric interpretations. But after all, it stands for the most transcendent of all realities. And it is what this weary age is waiting for, even when it may not know it. It wants to hear the voice of God in the midst of the institutions of human society. It longs for a way out of the black forest into the clear, open spaces of progress. The world is chagrined, bitterly disappointed, with the small amount of solace, of satisfaction, of zest, which it has wrung from invention, the expansion of knowledge, and the exploitation of the natural resources of the earth.

The world is dumbly crying for the mind of God upon the way of life. Many rich men would be willing to become poor again, if they could thus help the world on to the highroad of its true destiny. Many wise men would be willing to become as little children. Willing workers who have toiled and suffered under the burden and in the heat of the day, for the betterment of human conditions, would be

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## The Father's Reply

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ready to gladly die, if by dying they could thus contribute more nobly to the cause that is graven on their heart.

If Jesus of Nazareth were to stand upon the earth to-day, calling men to follow Him in the path of progress and peace and joy, and if men believed it was really Jesus, there would be surrenders of thrones and crowns, of wealth, of every kind of thing which the world counts great. There would be such a flocking towards Him, to stand beneath His banner, that the human mind would gasp before the magnitude of the revelation of the pent-up longing of our present age for the leadership of God in human affairs.

But as a matter of fact the spirit of Christ is actually on the field leading His own campaign ; and it is as you and I find time to put ourselves into honest and uncalculating relations with Him that we put ourselves in the way of finding out the meaning of life.

And it is as human society is willing to listen to the inner voice, and the interpretation which the inner voice gives of the outer jargon of voices, and is willing to follow out all the consequences of listening to that voice, that humanity will have a sense of the satisfying and sublime meaning of life.

You and I must ask the question as to the meaning of the education of our life in the quiet of communion with God ; it is in that attitude we find

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## The Meaning of Life

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ourselves. It is there that the spirit and mind are informed, inspired, and empowered, and without that equipment all other education, all other achievement, tumbles into the scrap heap of forgotten earthly glory.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## The Son's Letter

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### VIII

#### WHAT ARE HINDRANCES?

DEAR FATHER :

You have made clear to me that the meaning, the purpose, of one's life must be found out for oneself in quiet contact with the realities of the spiritual world. In seeking to come into vital contact with all that there is for us in the spiritual world towards the informing and inspiring of the inner life, one becomes aware of some definite or indefinite influences which seem to stand in the way.

There are certain things regarding which I am not perfectly sure whether they injure the sensitiveness of the inner life or not. You have demonstrated to me the immense importance of keeping the inner side of one's being in a condition of alert listening to inner suggestion, of being so attuned as to catch the inspirations which come upon the higher, finer side of one's nature.

And I have been wondering if it were not true that, all unconsciously, one may be permitting things, harmless enough in themselves, to deaden the mental and spiritual perceptions against grasping the higher realities. For example, there was a discussion the other night in regard to smoking.

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## What Are Hindrances?

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Five of us were in the rooms of two of our party. Two of the men argued that it was comforting, human, and friendly and quite harmless. Two others, puffing away for all they were worth, contended that on the whole it was not conducive to physical efficiency. I have been thinking about the matter since. Why should I not smoke? I have heard men speak angrily against the practice, giving reason after reason which, from my point of view, were not reasons at all. After all they said there was no light upon the subject. It was not argument, it was sheer prejudice.

With me the question resolves itself into whether it handicaps me physically, whether it in any way blunts the keenness of my mind at times of the day when I should be at my best. Whether it lowers the vitality of my spirit when I should be keyed for action. I would like to be sure whether it takes the keen edge off that listening attitude of the inner life, which we have been considering.

For it appears to me to be of enormous value that one should find out those things which fit him or unfit him for true living. I do not believe it is a question that this or that is wrong, simply because some good people have said so. The whole matter must be settled upon the basis of personal efficiency as one faces his work. If any habit weakens one's economic value, then it must go. If anything stands in the way of one's higher



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## The Father's Reply

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growth, if it in any way tends to deaden the inner sensibilities, then it should be flung over. But I am not so sure that smoking is one of those things.

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

You are anxious to eliminate the things which may hinder the efficiency of your life. You wish to keep the inner side of your nature keen and sensitive so that it may respond to the spiritual realities which inform and inspire it. You have resolved to part with whatever benumbs or weakens your power of self-expression.

And you bring up the smoking habit as illustrative of one of the things which may, or may not, stand in the way of your being at your best. You are not sure whether it is a hindrance or not.

I would not discuss this matter with you if you were a mature man.

The day is over when any one can have influence by saying a thing is wrong without giving adequate reasons. No question should be settled by mere tyranny. The tyrant is not a conqueror; he is simply, it may be, one who is able to have his own way, for the time being. And there are some good men who unconsciously play that part, and greatly injure the cause they have at heart.

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## What Are Hindrances?

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I do not insist that you shall not smoke, nor shall I bribe you by offering you a sum of money if you refrain, as some far better men than I have done with their sons. I want you to see that subject, and every other subject, in all its bearings, and then to decide for yourself, simply on the score that your course of action is the right one, and for no other reason.

The first point which I would put before you is, why should you smoke? That, it seems to me, should come before the question as to why you should not.

What is the motive which leads many young men of your age into the habit? Is it necessity, or is it inclination, or is it the influence of others? Is it a desire to stand in with others for the sake of their kindly estimate and companionship? I simply raise the question, not being in a position to give an accurate answer.

One of the motives for smoking, on the part of mature men, is the desire to be soothed and quieted after the strain and excitement of the day's work. They find the habit a pleasant occupation in the hour of relaxation over a newspaper or in conversation with a friend.

And some persistently keep the habit for that hour of reaction in the evening when the machinery of life is cooling down.

Many others spread the habit all over the day.

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## The Father's Reply

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Of course, every such habit tends to continually increase its demands for satisfaction. And it sometimes gets such a grip that a man would gladly be rid of it altogether, but he has not the courage to face the struggle involved.

One should be careful about encouraging a habit which may become a tyrant, and an enemy.

In the case of a very young man, the physical aspect of the matter should have serious consideration. The majority of physicians would agree in saying that one should not smoke at least until he is full grown. If there is such a weakness as the "tobacco heart" in strong, mature men, it is easy to see the danger for those whose bodies have not yet come to their full maturity.

I understand that one of the greatest railway companies in the world insists that even their out-of-door employees shall not smoke on duty.

What is the effect of smoking? Those who ought to know say it quiets one down. Some of them find it takes the keen edge from hard thinking, it tends to reduce their aggressive impulse. It has a mildly benumbing effect.

But this is not what you are after. You are not looking for something to turn the keen edge of your mind. You are not seeking a comfortable sense of refuge from duty. You are not anxious to have the icy water of the day's work warmed up before you take the plunge.

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## What Are Hindrances?

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Your supreme desire is to maintain the alertness, the wide-awake energy of your mind, to guard the inner side of your nature against anything that would quiet you down, instead of urging you on. You are out to get the keen morning air in your face, not the soft, warm summer evening breeze. You want the joy of offering your whole being to the touch of every reality that presses upon you.

At your age you must guard against everything that would tend to soften your manhood. There are practices which young men indulge under the guise that they are manly when as a matter of fact they are the last word of cowardice. What, for example, is the psychology of the drinking habit? Is it not an attempt to get away from the raw, blunt, hard facts of real life into a soft, dreamy world? Or is it not in some cases the fear of being chaffed, the fear of being met by the patronizing smile of veiled contempt?

In a period of national peace and great prosperity, for which every true man is thankful, there is a strong temptation in the direction of softness of character. There is the danger of setting up false standards of manliness, which are only cowardice in disguise. For cowardice can talk like heroism, only it is more noisy in its declarations of manliness. Heroism is modest; cowardice has a swaggering air. But when the testing time comes cowardice is sick in bed.

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## The Father's Reply

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I rejoice in your courageous desire to retain to its fullest extent the sensitiveness of your nature as it listens to the whispers of God and duty. For that attitude is self-expression in the highest sense. And self-expression, rather than self-sacrifice, is the highest function of life, but self-sacrifice is always necessary in order to achieve it.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## Healthy Mindedness

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### IX

### HEALTHY MINDEDNESS

DEAR FATHER:

Since it is your set purpose not to coerce me in regard to what I shall, or shall not, do, I feel it is due to you that I should not be influenced by those who have only the merest fraction of your experience. It would be rather mean to ignore your influence, which has clear rights in my life, and embrace the influence of any of my fellows, which has no such rights.

Besides, I am convinced that whatever has the appearance of injuring my efficiency as a growing man should be laid aside. For as it appears to me there is a new puritanism which is just as exacting as the old, perhaps more so. The old was dogmatic, without giving clear and satisfying reasons, the new is scientific and in the interests of sound equipment for living.

I am content therefore to bring my life under the authority of whatever points the way to a stronger personality, and a larger grasp upon the realities of life. It is not foolish and narrow to keep a patient who is suffering from scarlet fever away from those who are in good health, or to

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## The Son's Letter

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keep a man who is suffering from typhoid fever from eating everything he wants. The restriction is based on recognized law. And if I find things which are right enough in themselves, and in their own place, coming between me and the growth of a virile manhood, I want to throw those things out. But I would like you to help me to get at the rational basis of the problem. I may have an intuition that this or that is a hindrance, but would also like to know the reason for the intuition. I have a horror of being in any way fanatical, and an even greater horror of giving myself superior airs. So much so that my temptation may be to appear rather careless among my fellows. And while that may be a form of hypocrisy on my part, I would rather be guilty of it than surrender to the unctious kind.

It has appeared to me that the dose of highly coloured and pungent information which I get every morning from the newspaper is not the best mental appetizer for my day's work. It is as if I had started into dinner with a highly seasoned pudding first, and had no appetite for the joint afterwards.

You may think this is all nonsense, but I really find that easy, soft, interesting varieties of news tend to dampen my ardour for the somewhat stiff studies which I have to face during the first hour of the college day. It is like tasting something sour after molasses. I am perfectly certain that it

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## Healthy Mindedness

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requires much more of an effort to concentrate my mind upon my work after reading short, unconnected items of interesting news, put together in the most alluring and catching way. It is an easy occupation to drift along from one thing to another, without mental effort, while all kinds of unrelated stuff is sliding into my mind. When one comes to think of it, it is an awful mixture of sights and sounds, of yells and screams, of shocks and caresses.

But besides all that, it seems to tend to wipe out the serious, and steadying, and inspiring impressions of my quiet time. In the moments of silent reflection certain thoughts are written down upon the slate of one's memory, and then the confused, sensational story of the world's doings are written all over it, so that the slate carries no message whatever to the intelligence except disorder.

The mind has not really heard its marching orders for the day. It has not been keyed to its work. The thing seems to me to be unscientific and silly, in view of what one wants to accomplish.

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR :

I am a firm believer in the newspaper, and in the high educational value of respectable journal-



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## The Father's Reply

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ism. It is the only available means of current information for the community. The genuine, honest newspaper has a most wholesome place in modern society. Publicity is an excellent lash for wrongdoing, as it is an inspiration for good work. The newspaper helps us to realize our sense of brotherhood with the larger world. It may be the most powerful inspirer and educator of public opinion. But I do not believe it is necessary to read the whole of it at any time. Newspaper reading is a habit like every other habit which grows as it is encouraged.

For manly men the day should not be begun softly. Just as the shock of your cold bath every morning gives tone to your body, quickening your circulation, bringing you into tune with the keen air, making you feel how good it is to be alive, so should one begin his mental life for the day. I think therefore you are entirely right in discarding the newspaper in the morning. One wants to have his wits sharpened as he starts out to his work. And the mental life is sharpened by being challenged into concentration, by having the will summoned to an effort. That is the mental equivalent of a cold bath. The mind shrinks from the challenge, just as the body shrinks from the cold water, but the will makes the body take its inspiring dip, nevertheless. And the will must make the mind take its cold bath, too.

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## Healthy Mindedness

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We require something in the morning that will set the mental pace for the day, and at the same time preserve all the higher thoughts and whispers which one has heard in the silent moments of quiet meditation.

If one confined himself to certain parts of a reputable paper, such as the editorial columns, or any other part which called for sustained thinking, some terse, hard-headed article which did not let the mind down into softness there would be no harm done. As you have said, it is the unconnected, shrieking information, which makes no demand upon the reason, wiping out nobler impressions, that lowers the tone of the mind in the morning hours.

One requires mental exercises which brace and equip the personality at the beginning of the day. He requires clear light, guidance and power, in order to make the most of himself and of his work. As you have put it, it is a mistake to have dessert before the more substantial part of the meal, not only because it turns the palate against what is substantial, but it tends to crave the same light fare all through the day. The mind that will not endure hard discipline, nor practice concentration, is always looking out for a way of escape from duty. It is always seeking the point of least resistance. It has a habit of keeping its eye on the clock. It is dreaming of a good time at the

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## The Father's Reply

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end of the task. It hurries through difficulties without solving them. Such a temper of mind has no joyous delight in mental effort. It makes study a piece of dreary drudgery, and fills the sky of one's day with gray clouds.

It is therefore only common prudence to plunge right into the difficulties, rather than to listen to the pleadings of the softer side of human nature. It is in the heroic attitude of mind that the joy of work becomes a reality. It is in facing work as the normal business of the passing hours that peace is created in the depths of the elemental man, while all shirking and postponement of what is difficult tends to create a sense of indefinable cheerlessness. Mental cowardice produces uneasiness and unrest. And he who practices it envies in his heart those who have resolutely grappled with the hard facts which summoned the man in them.

Moreover, it is by holding the mind down to hard, consecutive thinking that the continuity of the spiritual impressions gathered in your season of meditation in the early morning is guaranteed. For mental concentration is the highroad upon which the spirit of God enters into the core of character. It is the psychology of all moral strength. While unconnected, fragmentary thinking, surrender to one impression after another, which have no underlying relation to each other, is the psychology of all moral weakness. And no amount of feverish activ-

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## Healthy Mindedness

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ity can make up for that weakness. No amount of formal devotion to the forms of religion can make up for ignoring this fundamental law by which religious reality enters into the soul and into the mind. The form of devotion without the habit of concentration of mind following it up, cancels the effectiveness of devotional exercises both in personal character and work.

That is one reason why some religious people are not strong personalities. They are perfectly sincere in their devotional life, and they make sacrifices in order to maintain its regularity ; they give ample time to it, but it has no channel along which to flow into the character, and into the facts of life.

Concentration of mind is that channel, and it is only as it is maintained unbroken, unobstructed, that the energies of the spiritual world can enter into living contact with life and its affairs. It is the lack of the habit of concentration which is one of the supreme causes of separating religion from conduct in the experiences of many well-meaning people. Two separate water-tight compartments are created, simply by having no door of mental concentration to connect the inner and outer aspects of life.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## The Son's Letter

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### X

#### GENIAL CONTACT WITH THE WORLD

DEAR FATHER :

I begin to see that mental vigour and concentration are the means by which the personality is kept open to the higher influences of the spiritual world. And I also see it is by the same means that personality grips the facts of life.

You have helped me to grasp this principle. And I recognize the relation which such things as smoking and light, unconnected reading and other things bear towards the principle. Nothing that weakens my mental vitality, or the power of sustained thinking, must be allowed any quarter at the beginning of the day's work. For it is the efficiency of my mind which is the point of contact between what I receive from the spiritual world on the one hand, and what I give to the tasks of the day on the other.

I shall try to keep the idea clearly before me. There is a subject suggested by what you have said which I would like to discuss with you.

It will not only be necessary to keep my mind vigorous and tenacious, but to let it have more definite terminal connections with the outer world.

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## Genial Contact With the World

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What I mean is that I am sometimes not successful in letting the finer impulses of my inner life out. For example, my friend Seton said the other day that I sometimes acted as if some men bored me terribly. He named one or two in whose company he said that I acted with an indifference which bordered upon rudeness. That I gave the impression occasionally, to some who did not know me, of being preoccupied with other thoughts rather than with what was being discussed at the moment. While he went on to say that he thought I was popular, the occasional indifferent bearing of which he spoke has bothered me. It was exceedingly kind in him to bring the matter up, because it was quite evident from the way in which he spoke of it that he was really my friend.

However, it was a surprise to know that I was guilty of such a practice. I might never have found it out, if it had not been brought to my attention, and it seems to me it is one of the functions of true friendship to bring such a failure in good manners before one, if it can be done in the gracious way in which Seton did it for me.

It has deepened my regard for him, and has shown me the nobility of his nature, in striking contrast to the habit of telling a third party, and letting the truth reach the offender's ears by a circuitous route. And when the message arrives it enters into one's spirit with the bite of the east wind.

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## The Father's Reply

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I am anxious to correct my rudeness, all the more since there was nothing behind it except thoughtlessness. But I would like to do it without in any way becoming self-conscious in the process. For there is a danger in that direction which would lead one to over-emphasize his attention in listening to others, to become fulsome in expressions of admiration, and altogether exaggerated in manner. That practice must strike the observer of it as artificial, and, in a measure, insincere. While such an estimate of exaggerated manner may be entirely wrong, the habit of extravagant cordiality might so react upon the character as to produce insincerity. But there is of course a middle way, which is neither gushing nor frigid, neither self-conscious nor thoughtless.

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

The tendency to be slack in one's attention to what another is saying is simply a failure to concentrate the mind. It is a bisection of thought, it is an attempt to do two things at the same time, while there is only one supreme duty at any one given moment. If some one is speaking, it is our duty, it is common courtesy, to let that person have our undivided attention for the time being. It is

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## Genial Contact With the World

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disrespectful to be in an attitude of mental hurry for the next thing, or to be thinking back to the previous thing which occupied the mind.

And it is part of the duty of respectful attention that we shall be able to show our interest, that our kindly concern shall be so evinced as to be evident. There are people who give their minds to the people who speak to them, but they do not give their outward expression. Their interest, their sympathy, is not in their eyes, in their whole manner. It is in their mind, perhaps in their heart, but they have not succeeded in the art of self-expression.

And it is not possible for others to know of the kindly feeling unless it is made plain to them by kindly manners.

A kind-hearted, interested person may be considered cold, distant, haughty, simply because he has not cultivated the complete outward expression of his inner life. He has not made the feelings of his heart enter into his hand-shake, or into the muscles of his face producing a smile, or into his eyes, or voice. The reason may be because he does not think it necessary, or worth while. Or he may be quite unaware of the fact. For it is quite possible to go through life without knowing that other people consider one cold. Every friend is not so courageously kind as your friend Seton.

In my judgment it is not only worth while to continue the feelings of one's heart to the point of



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## The Father's Reply

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complete physical expression, but we owe it to our fellow men. The failure to do it has not only limited the influence of many, but it has been the cause of heart-breaking misunderstandings, and life-long distance between people who might have been close and devoted friends.

Of course, outward expression may be overdone, it may be insincere. But everything has dangers. And because some are extravagant in their self-expression is no reason why others should refrain from it altogether, or remain reserved to such a degree as to create misunderstandings.

And it is that kind of misunderstanding which is one of the unnecessarily heavy burdens which some sensitive spirits have to carry all through life, simply because some of those with whom they habitually come into contact do not adequately reveal themselves. It is that frigid attitude towards them which drives some warm-hearted people into themselves, killing their joy, robbing them of the kindliness which they have a right to expect, and which they would rather have than bread, or presents.

And the pity of it all is that the cause is very often mere thoughtlessness, a failure to link up the outer channels of expression with the warm feelings of the heart. Such carelessness may appear to be a small affair, but it gives rise to a vast deal of pain and sorrow, which might easily be avoided.

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## Genial Contact With the World

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Our whole physical bearing was surely meant to be the vehicle of the expression of the spirit within. The way in which we stand, or sit, or walk, the substance and manner of our speech, should reveal the supremacy of the will and of the concentrated mind. We were taught as children that it was important to have the nails, the hair, the teeth, the clothes, in such a condition as to be worthy of those who respected themselves. It cannot be less important to carry on that scrupulous care into every detail of physical expression.

The will has a great deal to do with the matter. It must be summoned to grapple with moods, and depression, and straying impulses. It must finish its work by dominating our manner of speech, as well as the substance of it, by conquering the eye, and hand, and muscle, for the transmission of the messages of a kind heart and a concentrated mind.

An energetic will, a disciplined mind, a warm heart are the psychological factors in gracious manners. And believing as we do, we owe these to everybody. It is not by any means easy any more than learning to paint or to play, but it is enormously worth while to try to bring the artistic idea into character as well as the forceful idea. We fail sometimes, we fall short of our ideal all the time, but "to be conscious of a limitation is to be beyond it."

While contending for graciousness of manners to

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## The Father's Reply

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all young women, the chivalrous young man will be swift to recognize the border-line between kindly manner and over-familiarity. He will have an intuitive sense that he owes it to his own self-respect as well as to the feelings of every woman, that his bearing shall be such as he would have other men manifest towards his own sister. He is under an imperative obligation not to be the means of creating a misleading impression in a woman's mind, nor of having her name in any way cheapened in the eyes of the world. He owes it to the man who may one day claim her love, that her heart and mind and name shall be unsullied.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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# The Management of Speech

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## XI

### THE MANAGEMENT OF SPEECH

DEAR FATHER :

The management of the thoughts is not an easy task. I recognize that the impression which I have created in the mind of some, of being pre-occupied whilst they have been speaking to me, was caused by a lack of concentration. But I find it to be an extraordinarily difficult matter to keep my mind fixed.

I constantly find my thoughts wandering from the theme which should engage my attention. Sometimes the suggestion which captures me is merely a passing sight, sometimes it is an idea which springs from I know not where, sometimes it is a thought of which I am ashamed. For while I have not outwardly done anything of which I am particularly ashamed, I would not wish to have all my thoughts written out. And I realize that it is the thought-life which is the storm centre of character.

I am trying hard to keep my mind harnessed to definite ideas, and especially in those fragments of time during the day when one is not absorbed by pressing duties.

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## The Son's Letter

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I am endeavouring to retain a consecutive line of thinking straight through for a given period of time, struggling to shut out all irrelevant suggestions which come making their appeal for consideration, and which have nothing whatever to do with the subject in hand.

I find that in taking a walk it is sometimes made more enjoyable when I try to hold the mind steadily to consider the train of thought upon which I had previously been reading.

So much of my reading has been forgotten because I did not make a habit of mentally going back to it, to brood over it, to reflect upon it.

In the attempt to practice concentration, I have found it an excellent thing in the periods of relaxation during the day to commit to memory some of the great verses of the Bible, or a few lines of poetry.

It is a great aid to steadiness of thought. Besides, it acts as an antidote to being bored. I have often been dreadfully bored by having nothing definite to think about. And it was just then the temptation became strong to get into mischief, to do something that would create an exhilarating relief from ennui. But stimulating mental occupation is an excellent antidote for dangerous suggestions.

I believe that very many who choose what is harmful do it not because they are keen upon what is wrong, but for the reason of not having any in-

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## The Management of Speech

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tellektual resources. They have not cultivated living in the realm of the mind, of seeking the higher methods of satisfaction; they have not persisted in the habit of companionship with the treasures of literature, or in sustained contact with some problem.

And to be perfectly frank, the higher way of getting inner satisfaction has not always seemed to me to have the appearance of being able to give the greatest amount of happiness. Possibly that is the reason why young men are caught in a trap by the lower way.

If the highest use of the mind always appeared, right off, to offer the most satisfying results there would be many more people at the practice of it. But it is so often the other way about, the lower way seems to promise something at once, something tangible, something without effort, and men are cruelly caught by the illusion.

I find it takes some time of persevering continuance to really see for oneself how much more sheer delight there is in the highest sustained use of the thoughts. And while I have not yet made much of a success at it, it is clear to me that concentration of mind upon worthy pursuits is the highroad to inner peace and power.

Before closing my letter let me make a confession; it will be a relief to let out a bitter, torturing sense of having been guilty of a gross injustice. Some time ago I heard an ugly rumour about Caleb

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## The Father's Reply

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Short, whom you may remember. Somehow I never liked or trusted him; well, while some men were discussing him the other day, I told the whole miserable tale as authentic.

Since that time I have been informed that he is not the man of whom the story is true. My informant had made a mistake in the name, and came to me to correct his error. In the meantime, I am responsible for having passed on the false accusation. I shall mend the matter to the best of my ability, but what torments me is that the slander may not be wholly silenced.

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

When you say that the lower suggestion of obtaining enjoyment often comes to one with a more persuasive appeal, with a more instantaneous appearance of giving substantial satisfaction than the higher use of the mind promises, I quite agree.

As you have said, it takes some time of persistent, heroic effort in the highest exercise of the thoughts before one sees and feels the unspeakable superiority of the one way over the other way.

The determination to compel the mind to think upon the noblest themes does not always carry with it the immediate promise of happiness.

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## The Management of Speech

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One has to steadily remember that appearances in this matter are fatal. The lower ways of answering the hunger of the spirit come before the imagination with loud, blazing, enticing promises ; while the promises of the higher ways are shy, quiet, reluctant. It is like the difference between the claims of a quack doctor glorifying his nostrums into magical power before a gaping crowd in the market-place, and the keen, wise specialist who, in the quiet of his consulting room, reaches the exact seat of trouble without gilded talk.

I am distressed to hear that you have spoken falsely and unwarrantably about Caleb Short.

I do not know what you have said, but since you are rightly suffering as a result of your action it must be that you have done him a great injustice.

Let the regret burn itself into your soul. Do not spare yourself. It is only as one lets himself have a thoroughly miserable time of it, that he is likely to be cured of the habit of unbridled talk.

There are times when one must speak out bravely what he knows about another for the good of an institution, or for the public good. And it may be a very disagreeable task, and in doing it one is apt to receive harsh, unreasonable criticism and enmity for his courageous attitude. The satisfaction one has in these circumstances is that his motive was high and clean, and he is perfectly willing to take



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## The Father's Reply

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all the consequences which fall upon him as the result of his utterance.

But when one utters dangerous gossip, and all gossip is dangerous, when he lets his tongue loose upon other people and their affairs carelessly, maliciously, or merely to entertain listeners, then we are dealing with an entirely different matter. And I gather from your letter that you feel yourself among the gossips. It is one's motive, or lack of motive, which puts one in that class. It is when there is no genuinely high, helpful purpose served, or intended, in talking about one's fellows that he becomes a mischievous person, and such a person makes himself a social disturber. There is not a sufficiently strong public conscience against idle gossip. If it were branded as a black, base, cowardly thing there would be less of it. If it were part of our social code of honour not to speak of a man except as we are quite ready that he should hear from our own lips face to face, we should be approaching manliness in speech. It would be a wholesome thing if some of the acid were poured into the word "gossip" which we find in the word "hypocrite." But that time has certainly not yet arrived.

The unbridled use of the tongue is looked upon as a mild weakness. The practice of unrestrained speech about other people and their affairs runs right through all kinds of society, religious and ir-

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## The Management of Speech

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religious, wise and ignorant, rich and poor. The practice is a chronic social failing.

Men are just as busy at it in their clubs as women are in their drawing-rooms. And it does more harm than a war. It is the cruelest form of amusement. People who would be shocked at the suggestion that they should take part in a prize-fight can give their neighbour a stab in the back with the rusty blade of gossip, working thereby far more harm than a straightforward blow in the face. It is quite true that the thing may be done through sheer thoughtlessness, with no really malicious purpose. And, of course, thoughtlessness is not so low as malice, so far as the one who utters the remark is concerned. But it does not in the least save the situation so far as the injured person or the world is concerned. The point is that the deadly work is done all the same. The unrestrained utterance is out, and it thereafter belongs to all sorts of people, kind and unkind, truthful and untruthful, tactful and tactless. And what was said thoughtlessly has gone beyond recall.

Feeling sorry cannot bring it back. What was started as a careless snowball may have loosened an avalanche, working untold misery on its swift journey.

I have lived long enough to know that confidential remarks about others are more than a mistake, except in very rare and unusual circumstances.

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## The Father's Reply

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One must be prepared to meet his confidential statement in the crowded market-place, and prepared to see it having grown huge, almost beyond recognition, in the interval.

I am thinking now of a man who always makes his remarks confidentially, but that is only his peculiar way of informing the community. It is a contemptible form of gossip when ungenerous criticisms of men are clothed in a certain tone of reluctant regret, both in manner and voice, so that the worst kind of cant is added to cowardly speech.

Put yourself right with Short in the wisest, manliest way that the circumstances permit. Make up to him in full measure for the injustice you may have done. Never be niggardly in your apologies. And let the incident teach you a lifelong lesson in the heroic management of your talk. Do not speak at random because a man, or a company of men expect you to talk; have the courage to be silent when you have nothing worthy to contribute. But let your silence always be as kindly as your speech.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## Concerning Money

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### XII

### CONCERNING MONEY

DEAR FATHER :

I trust the lesson to be absolutely fair in talking about absent people has been learned. But it will not be altogether easy to put it into practice for there is so much discussion of individuals, and before one knows it, he has said things which he wishes afterwards he had left unsaid. But I shall try to keep before my mind the injustice of which I have already been guilty. While in the future I may talk less about people, I hope what is said may be to more purpose, and less merely to make interesting conversation.

Before I came here you talked over with me the question of my allowance, and it seemed to me to be enough for all that would be required. You said that you were anxious that men in poorer circumstances should not have their lot made harder by any evidence of display or extravagance on my part. You were strong in your condemnation of ostentation, because it was bad for me, and it worked a spirit of discontent into the mind of some who could with great difficulty make ends meet. I remember you insisted that for one to

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## The Son's Letter

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have more money than was necessary tended to make a harmful and artificial distinction between students, where no such distinction should exist. That it gave a false emphasis to the place which money should occupy, and that such emphasis was of the essence of vulgarity. What you said reconciled me to the situation, for to be quite candid, while I did not say so, I thought perhaps my allowance might have been just a trifle more, especially when I happened to know the sums which one or two other men were receiving. Then I also knew what you gave to charitable objects.

But when I compare what you give me with what the great bulk of the men have, then I feel myself to be fortunate, indeed. And I am now really satisfied with the amount; it was the comparison with a few who are exceptional cases, which inspired a brief disappointment.

To come straight to the point, it is about eight days until the end of the month, and as I have received the bills for some things which I bought last week, it would be awfully good of you if you will let me have my allowance a little earlier than usual.

I am frankly a little ashamed to put the case so bluntly, but I do not feel there has been any wicked extravagance.

There have been no bombastic attempts at display, and while I probably get more than what

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## Concerning Money

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eighty per cent. of the men possess, I have exceedingly little in my pocket.

I have simply not kept the brakes on, and the money has gone without a great deal to show for it. You know that I would not be ashamed to put the detailed account of it before you; all that has been spent has been in perfectly legitimate ways.

I ought to have had enough in hand to pay the accounts which came in, but I haven't, and it is difficult to remember back where it all went.

Let me say quite honestly that I do not desire a larger allowance, but would appreciate receiving my check a little earlier.

Your affectionate son,  
ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

You will find your check enclosed herewith.

Do you remember the words Dickens put into the mouth of Micawber? "Annual income £20; annual expenditure £19-19-6: result happiness."

That is absolutely true, and truer than it may seem to you, for freedom from anxiety concerning money should leave the mind free and clear for the day's work.

Before you left home I went carefully over the whole matter of your allowance. I remembered what I received under similar circumstances. It

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## The Father's Reply

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was not a large sum but with great care it was quite enough. I was not denied anything that was really necessary for my physical, mental, or social well-being. But there was not much of a margin. And I am glad to-day that it was so.

In your case I took into account that times are somewhat changed since my day; everything is more expensive; college life may have more aspects of perfectly legitimate interest. I made ample recognition of these facts. And I talked over the subject of allowances in a general way with a very sensible, prosperous friend of mine whose son is a recent graduate.

So that when I told you the sum you were to receive, I was convinced that it was just and right.

For it appeared to me that you were to be educated by the proper use of money as well as by books. And as you have said in your letter, I have very strong convictions upon the pernicious social influence of extravagance and display. And I consider the bearing of insolence, and of aggressive superiority, which some ill-bred rich people cultivate, to be a menace to the peace of our social order. It is an intolerable imposition upon our democratic age.

I am inclined to say no more about the matter, lest I should appear to invade the freedom of your own mind, in the solving of a problem which must always in the last analysis rest with yourself.

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## Concerning Money

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Your allowance is fixed for this year, and as you say, it is ample. But more than that, you must realize that there is no financial support back of that allowance on which you may rest. Your total wealth for the year is exactly the sum which you receive month by month, and not a penny more or less. Your imagination may not call up what I possess when you incur a financial obligation.

I could give you more, I could pay your bills if you were pushed, you know that perfectly well. And that is exactly the dangerous point. It is such knowledge which plays havoc in some young men's lives.

What I wish you to settle definitely in your mind is that if you should overstep the limit of your means, to that degree you have become bankrupt. It is not easy for me to take up a position of this kind.

It would be much easier to say that you can get whatever money you wish. But I dare not do that, because the interests of your life are far dearer to me than any money I may possess.

Having said this will you let me suggest several things which experience has shown me to be of value? And, first of all, if I were you, I would keep a book of expenses into which everything should be entered, and I put the emphasis on the word "everything."



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## The Father's Reply

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It is not because I would like to see it. I would not look at it if you were to bring it to me. Our relations with one another are not on that level. We are comrades, who wholly trust each other. But if you were to put everything down, there would be a great satisfaction at the end of the month in seeing just how, and where, the money went.

Then, too, if I were in your place, I should allow so much for each week or month, planning to lay aside a certain sum for unusual expenses.

There is nothing in which system is more necessary than in the expenditure of money, and there is nothing in which many people are so absolutely without system.

Your present predicament reveals the result of it. For weeks to come I suppose you will have to put the brakes on tight in order to get back to normal conditions. Let me also say that it is not fair to tradesmen to keep them out of their money after it has been earned.

Those men have usually very small capital, and their peace of mind, the welfare of their families, depend upon prompt payment of what people owe them. I have no doubt that if you knew the hardship wrought in a poor family when bills that were due were not paid, the man in you would say: "Never so long as I live shall I be guilty of such cruelty." Because those men say nothing, and smile

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## Concerning Money

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away with an air of indifference your apology for tardiness, bear in mind that all the same the iron may have entered into the souls of their children. That silent or genial bearing of theirs is partly the way in which they must retain their customers.

The practice of keeping hard earned money from men and women which is largely for labour, that has been performed from early morning till late at night, accompanied by honest sweat and fatigue, is consummate shabbiness.

It is a wholesome discipline to go without something one would like, rather than to act unhand-  
somerly in regard to the payment of obligations.

Some of the keenest joys of life spring from anticipation rather than from possession. Many could tell you this has been their own experience, especially in those things in which money is concerned. Besides, let us never forget that the nations, or the men who have had the hardest struggle are those who usually have achieved most. A certain amount of self-denial in some form or another is absolutely essential to strength of character. The one bears a direct, vital relation to the other. It is part of the natural history of the inner life; there is no getting away from it.

Your mother told me that in one of your recent letters to her you expressed sympathy for the hard financial struggle of Marcus Hardin, the son of the teacher in Latin at your old boarding-school. My

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## The Father's Reply

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dear boy, if I judge Hardin rightly, he does not want your sympathy, and I have an impression that long before the race of life is over, some men who do not think so now will be glad to acknowledge with some pride that they knew Hardin in his student days. There is a force, a depth, a mental cleanness and tenacity of purpose, developed in difficult circumstances, which is the material out of which success is made, and I would have you bear in mind that Hardin in his circumstances is in the way of getting a finer culture, a truer education, than men situated as you are.

Before closing this letter let me also remind you that there is a distinct place for the margin idea in money matters, as well as in the use of time. One who has all the money that is good for him must recognize that there are small and large causes beyond his personal needs which have a direct claim upon him. Because these claims are not pressed, because the social standards around him do not make a man feel ashamed when he does not meet them, does not alter the case. For a true man, there are debts of honour to the poor, and to the organized efforts of good men on behalf of the progress of the world, which one ignores at the risk of narrowing and hardening his heart. It is of the very essence of manliness to severely check one's personal expenditures so as to have as liberal a margin as possible for causes which depend upon spontaneous

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## Concerning Money

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individual liberality. It is not a question of one's mood in the matter ; it is an actual, vital part of true living.

And because some people can ignore the responsibilities of giving, and may not be criticised in any way for it, makes it all the more a debt of honour to a true man.

How can men be stewards of large sums of money in later years, if they have had no training in that direction in their youth, if their hearts and minds have not been exercised by patient and sympathetic interest in the world's noblest work ? Such men have a very serious lack in their education, and it becomes painfully obvious later on, when some of them appear to be quite ignorant of the most important channels along which their money might run for the betterment of the world.

Because a young man has only what he considers a small margin to give away is no reason why he should ignore the principle. Great causes flourish on long lists of small amounts. And men find their moral education by being careful to give their small amounts away. No amount is too small to contribute, so long as intelligent interest and good-will go along with it. It is a magnificent training for the days of larger things. I never like to hear a man say that he would do a great deal of good with a large fortune if he had it ; there is something hollow about the utterance. The real point is to

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## The Father's Reply

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give what one has to give, and to do it with the head as well as with the heart. There is need for training among young men to give with intelligence, with some idea of system and proportion.

It is quite possible to give something away, and if there is no record kept, to think one is doing a great deal more than he really does. Some men would blush with shame if they were to see in black and white how little they give away in the course of a year, in proportion to what they spend on themselves and their families ; and they would feel dishonoured if the world saw the statement.

One of the supreme tests of a man's character is what he is willing to do quietly, and unnoticed, for individuals and for the causes of the world, as they stretch out from his own door to the heart of China, or India. Let us never forget that we are in training to be Cosmopolitan men, learning to have the breadth of a world-wide outlook and sympathy, and while charity begins at home it has still a long journey before it.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## The Seat of Character

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### XIII

#### THE SEAT OF CHARACTER

DEAR FATHER:

While I recognize the complete justice of your letter, and the cordial desire for my highest efficiency which was behind it, you hit me awfully hard. I really had not thought much about the money question and its various aspects. Many thanks for your check.

I have paid everything I owed, and shall learn to live within my income right up to the end of each month in future. In the meantime, the economy that will be necessary through the coming month will give me a new appreciation of the value of money.

And beginning with the following month I hope to introduce the margin idea. I fear it has been woefully neglected in my case, and yet it is a principle which one recognizes to be part of a well-ordered life. But it is with me, as with so many others, the principle of giving has merely received my mental assent that it is a right thing to do, while the actual doing of it has been practically ignored.

The difficulty is to have the grit to cut off a slice

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## The Son's Letter

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of one's income, and to lay it aside for good causes. It is like a surgical operation ; one winces under it.

But I shall make an honest attempt to turn the idea into a definite practice. However, when the sum has been mentally put aside the next difficulty is to know to which causes to give it.

It is not at all easy to know where to begin and where to end. Of course, at present it is only a theoretical difficulty with me, rather than a practical one, for the practical moment has not yet arrived.

At the same time, I wish there were some large plan by which all the objects to which one should give might be federated, so that the money could go to a clearing house and be divided up by experts.

Still, I suppose the personal element, the individual touch, the widening of one's intelligent sympathy, might be lacking in such a scheme.

I really think, however, that it is because there are so many objects calling for money, that some people are confused into inaction in regard to every cause. Some others find the multitude of demands provide for them an opportunity and excuse for sliding out of every appeal for money, an opportunity which they are eager to embrace.

If there should exist some board of advice to which one could go, and having obtained it, feel that the very best causes were thus having the at-

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## The Seat of Character

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tention they required, there would be a satisfaction in helping to meet the whole situation at the fountainhead. If there were a science of central distribution, there might be a great deal more to distribute, and not so many people would be able to get through the meshes of the collecting drag-net.

As it is, I do not honestly know which cause should claim the bulk of the little I shall have to give. In a general way I feel that the cause of religion at home and abroad should have the first claim, on the principle that religion works at the very base of the progress of the world. But even in religion there are so many departments of activity requiring aid, that there again very many get out of giving to even one phase of the situation because of the multiplicity and variety of the appeals.

For the present year at any rate, I shall give half of my little margin to my church for its various schemes, and I shall give the other half to other causes with which I may be brought into contact, and through information which may come to me.

You may remember Gerald Fitzroy, who came to our house occasionally two or three years ago. He was always a most likable boy, so thoroughly kind-hearted. Well, it is common knowledge that he is going sadly wrong. This is not mere gossip, and it is not in any spirit of eager tale bearing that I tell you of it. If I were strong enough, and good enough, I would greatly like to help him.



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## The Father's Reply

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He began to shun his friends some time ago, and now his friends shun him.

I have quietly asked the strongest and most attractive man I know, an older man than I, to try to get into friendly contact with him.

He is really interested, and I believe he, if anybody, will be able to get hold of Gerald.

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

Your remarks regarding Gerald Fitzroy make me feel badly both for him and for his family.

I know his father; he is a man of great elevation of character. But I do not consider his judgment good in some things, as I ventured to tell him on one occasion when he was discussing Gerald. He indicated the line he was taking with his son, insisting that he would have obedience at all hazards and in matters which in my judgment were quite within the region of being discussed as to whether it was just to enforce them. I told him that as I looked at the case, and since he had brought the matter up, he was playing the part of a policeman towards Gerald rather than an adviser.

His father has tried to impose his will upon his

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## The Seat of Character

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son without trying to get his spirit and reason to coöperate. The father has endeavoured most earnestly to make Gerald echo his own sentiments by mere unreasoning force, instead of trying to help him to create his own sentiments.

The result is that the young man has no convictions of his own, while he has been brought up in an atmosphere of strong religious example. But it was example where hard unbending principle was not mixed with joy and a sweet reasonableness. I suppose from the way in which he expressed himself to me, Mr. Fitzroy never discussed anything with his son; he was simply told to do a thing. The roots of his life were not fed, his own mind was not taught to think, to arrive at conclusions for himself.

His life has been one of repression rather than that of healthy, informed, guided expression. He has lived as an automatic, involuntary echo of his forceful father, rather than as a persuaded and convinced originator of his own actions. Christian character is not merely correct conduct; it is conduct springing from the depths of one's own personality, as it has been inspired by the realities of the Eternal. Character in order to be a personal possession must be the outcome of a personal choice made by the highest elements in us. One may do right things for a time through the mere impact of another's will, as the impact of a locomotive may

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## The Father's Reply

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send an attached car flying along the railway line for a time, but it will stop presently.

There is no guarantee of moral continuance except as morality is the outward expression of the inner individual man. Mere imitation is not necessarily character. Just as iron which is flung into the furnace, comes out molten, and flows flaming white into its mold, so the imitation of others must pass into the furnace of one's own personality and come out molten originality.

The whole man was not in what Gerald did ; he did not act from the elemental base of his nature. The forces of his being remained raw, soft, and undisciplined, while for the time being his outer behaviour was directly by outside pressure. As a consequence, when that outward pressure was to a certain extent removed, and the untried man was called upon to act for himself in difficult circumstances, his weak, untempered powers chose the points of least resistance. And the unhappy result is as you have indicated. I am glad you have quietly interested an older man than yourself who has great strength of character, combined with a happy enthusiasm to quietly put himself alongside of him. After that, three or four of you in a natural, human, friendly way might gradually be able to draw him away from his present outside associations, and so provide a different atmosphere for him. But as I have already said, it is the exercise

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## The Seat of Character

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of his own powers which, on the human side, is the only thing that can really bring Gerald on to a higher level of life. A change of moral atmosphere will do much in helping to stimulate his inner powers to act for themselves, but in the last analysis, it must be his own convinced choice of the higher type of living which shall determine his future character.

For we must not forget that genuine living begins in the direction in which our thoughts move. It is possible for a man to be moving towards moral decay whose outward life is apparently blameless, if the direction of his thoughts is not continually upon what is worthy and pure. It is in the thoughts that moral changes take place, and when we hear of a sudden, startling, moral collapse in a life which had been hitherto without outward reproach, that collapse, in most instances, had been going on in the thought life of the individual. So that it is of the greatest concern for us all to control and train our thoughts to rest only upon what makes for cleanness and strength. Every moral failure, of which we hear, is a summons to us not to play the part of the Pharisee, but it is an urgent call to increase our own vigilance in the region of our secret desires and imaginations.

It is a vast mistake to think we are so much better than other people, because we have not outwardly splashed in the mud, as some of them

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## The Father's Reply

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have, because we have not stained our outer life. How is it with our thoughts? It is possible to stain the imagination. It is possible to weaken the will by secret surrender to base impulses. It is possible to be shamefully defeated in the battles of life without the world knowing anything about it. It is possible for a man to retire at night a beaten coward, because he had not called out the reserves of his manhood to quell the impulses of his baser self. It is when the imagination is permitted by the will to imagine only that which is clean and true, it is when the secret thought life is made to travel into regions in which we should be willing at all times to have any one find us, it is only then we are really victorious in life.

That struggle to be inwardly true is the fountainhead of manliness, it is the foundation of character, it is the safeguard of conduct. It is therefore of the most urgent practical value to have the mind busy with healthy problems, with concerns that demand concentration, with mental images that purify character, and give tone to the whole being. This is especially necessary when one is at leisure.

Think for a moment of the number of hours in a single day in which the mind is not harnessed to a definite task. Consider the time and thought that are given to all kinds of things that have no right to usurp a single moment of our attention. If

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## The Seat of Character

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those thoughts were written out, the reading of them would sometimes suggest the torn up fragments to be found in a waste paper basket, or they might suggest the disconnected utterances of a maniac. I have never forgotten what my university professor in philosophy told me when I visited him on one occasion at his country home; speaking of this very point, he said that he never went out to take a walk without having some problem which he discussed with himself.

Of course, you say one cannot always be discussing problems, which is quite true, but one can train himself to think with concentration upon definite objects of thought. These minds of ours are not libraries in which golden thoughts are stored at one hour of the day, and mere receptacles for rubbish into which all sorts of fragments may be flung at another hour. We cannot always be thinking of the same things, it would be disastrous for our minds if we did. But we can insist that our minds shall never at any time become the dumping ground for whatever the world has to fling into them. For it is when the mind becomes listless, tired, uncontrolled, that the base impulse gets a hearing and a foothold. It has no chance when a man is hard at work, when he is in the thick of a game of football, when his whole being is aglow with a fine enthusiasm. At such a time the wizened, croaking imp of sinister suggestion is seen in all its ghastly, revolting ugliness.

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## The Father's Reply

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It is the vacant hour that becomes the dread crisis in the inner life. Happy is the man who when he is released from immediate duty can call up memories, images, schemes, hobbies, characters, which refresh, and restore, and entertain his tired brain. Happy is he who has so enriched his mind that he can call up at will the great souls of history, the supreme characters of literature, and commune with them. Happy is he who has so learned the great messages of the Bible that in his hour of relaxation he can receive inspiration and wisdom from those great passages from which the makers of our civilization drank as from a crystal spring.

And those great sources of mental inspiration are open to us all, and never so wide open as now. And yet after all that is gloriously open to us for the cheering and strengthening of our minds, it still happens that minds are dangerously vacant, ready to listen to any suggestion, the message of advertisements on flaming posters, or anything else that happens to capture the eye. Depend upon it, Arthur, you and I are no better than the strength and direction of our thoughts. We may let them drift into the muddy, stagnant pools of mere inclination, or we may by the heroism of our will lead our minds into those uplands of thought where the air is keen, and where visions of truth speak to us of eternal reality.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## Anxiety Concerning Influence

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### XIV

#### ANXIETY CONCERNING INFLUENCE

DEAR FATHER:

Ever since my friend Seton informed me of my failure in cordiality towards one or two men of our acquaintance, I have wondered how far that attitude may have unconsciously extended.

I have since been doing my level best to give myself in concentrated, interested attention to everybody with whom I have come into contact, and realize in the effort how deficient I may have been in that particular in the past.

The experience made me sensitive as to my standing, it has made me wonder whether I really had any. When some one answered my word of greeting in an apparently cold way, or did not appear to see me across the street, I had a feeling that it was resentment for some previous coldness on my part.

I confess to having been disturbed over the possibility of being misunderstood. For it is only natural that one should desire to be liked by one's associates, especially when he has a keen fondness for companionship.

Some may not care whether people like them or



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## The Son's Letter

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not, and may carry themselves with increasing severity of manner in consequence, but I care a great deal. And I would be willing to make very considerable sacrifices of feeling, consistent with self-respect, in order to have the good-will of my fellows.

I sometimes thought that perhaps I might be unpopular because of my enthusiastic admiration of a small group of men, who are considered by some to be altogether too strict and earnest in their mode of life.

I do not belong to the group; I could not consider myself good enough, even if the opportunity were offered me to enter their circle. But at the same time when they have been discussed and sometimes criticised, I have indicated my warm admiration of them.

Then, too, it had been coming over me lately that perhaps my secret resolve to live right up to my convictions in every direction might be the means sooner or later of throwing me down.

It was therefore not so much a satisfaction of pride, as a thankful relief from a chilling suspicion of unpopularity, when Seton told me the other day that he heard favourable expressions regarding me from various quarters. He said things that surprised me greatly. I feel like kicking myself for writing upon this sort of thing even to you, but it had taken such a hold of me, this dread fear

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## Anxiety Concerning Influence

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of being shunned, that in the sense of relief from suspense, I feel impelled to tell you what had been passing through my mind. You know me well enough to understand that this is not written in a spirit of silly conceit, but rather in the spirit of quiet thankfulness that the attitudes of aloofness which I fancied were after all the creations of my own imagination.

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

I am naturally interested in your social success; it would hurt me to learn that you were to be a failure in that direction. But one of the things which would hurt me much more is that you should purchase popularity at the price of your convictions. It would be sheer cant if I were to say I did not care whether you are to be popular or not. I do care, and care a great deal. But let me say, with all my heart, that I care a vast deal more that you shall be in every respect a manly man, that your conduct shall be governed by your reason, your conscience, and your will, at whatever cost. If popularity is not to be yours while you travel the road of uncompromising loyalty to what you know to be right, then I am content to have it so. And I shall be proud in the knowledge that I

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## The Father's Reply

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have a son who is brave enough to accept misunderstanding, and even derision, rather than be false to his highest light.

Never forget that social success which is secured by bartering the native sincerities of personality is the very worst possible bargain. It is to part with the crown jewels of the soul for broken glass. It is to lose battles gathering straws. For when one gets any apparent advantage in any sphere of life by moral surrender, the man himself is degraded by the surrender.

You would not steal something which you might wish to possess, you would rather die on the spot. So, to obtain any social blessing by casting aside high principle would bring the transaction down to the same level as stealing.

It would be moral trickery, even more than that, it would be moral suicide. And let me say I greatly doubt whether any man who plays fast and loose with principle can ever be genuinely popular. Depend upon it, none can scent reality and unreality better than young men such as those with whom you are associated. They know shoddy from the real article.

When some one is foolishly untrue to himself in order to create a favourable impression, men silently despise him even as they look into his face, and they puncture his weaknesses when they are among their friends.

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## Anxiety Concerning Influence

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I do not believe that those who must have social favour at any price ever really get it ; for a time they may seem to possess it, but it turns out at last to be an apple which has crumbled to ashes in their hands.

My dear Arthur, do not let your mind rest upon popularity any more than you let it rest upon physical growth. You are six feet in height, and you did not reach it by worrying about it.

It came by concerning yourself with wholesome food, exercise, work and sleep ; nature did all the rest. You grew when you were unconcerned about your growth. The same principle operates in regard to happiness. Those who are hunting it most continuously are not the people who find it. My observation has shown me that the most discontented persons are those who make a business of pursuing pleasure. Whilst those who have forgotten all about happiness, and are working away with enthusiasm at some worthy task have found songs of joy rising up in their hearts.

And popularity must come in the same way. Do not let your mind dwell upon it ; forget about it. It is not your affair to create popularity. But it is very much your concern to be straight and kind, to be considerate and courageous. That is your part of the programme. There is a wise Providence looking after the other part. Do not try to take His aspect of the question into your hands. The burden is too heavy for any man, and

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## The Father's Reply

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it kills some. It is too much for you ; you will spoil it ; therefore leave it alone. Keep steadily to your own task. You have determined to live up to your highest light. That is all there is to be done in the matter.

Do not forget that influence upon others is a by-product produced from singleness of purpose. It is created indirectly. It rises naturally like steam from hot water.

The people who exert the most powerful influence do not think about it ; they simply do what they have to do with all their heart and mind. They are greatly surprised when they are told that they are regarded highly.

The greatest things in life come indirectly ; happiness, influence, and growth are all examples of the working of this law.

The man who begins to worry about his influence has lost his road in life. Of course, let me say here there are some so low in their moral indifference that they do not care about their influence. They are too degraded to be in the least concerned ; it would be a sign of returning moral health if they were to get into a state of anxiety and shame over how they appear to others. But I am not thinking of such characters now ; I am thinking of those who are living true and earnest lives, and at the same time are troubled about the impression they are making.

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## Anxiety Concerning Influence

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Whenever one who is living up to his light begins to try to manipulate his influence with others he walks into a dark tunnel. Why? Because he has become self-conscious. And when a man becomes self-conscious he begins to play a part. He begins to pose, and he may even have a high motive in it. For example, I know a man who tries too hard to influence people for good. He is thoroughly genuine, I believe. But his over-anxious efforts to make an impression for good have affected the tone of his voice; it has become unctuous; his eyes look up rather than straight into yours. His manner is altogether artificial. Do not mistake me. That man is no hypocrite. But he has taken the question of influence into his own hands, instead of living a natural, fearless, manly life, leaving all the consequences in the hands of God.

The result of trying too hard is that there is a certain oppressive odour of forced sanctity about the man. His smile is too soft and sweet to be perfectly natural. And as a consequence of the atmosphere which he carries most people avoid him, while some think he is a fraud.

I do not believe anything of the kind. But he illustrates an extreme example of the man who worries over his influence.

Do not spend time upon how men are going to take an action of yours which you know to be right, and which you try to carry out in a gentle-

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## The Father's Reply

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manly, high-minded way. The consequences are not your business, and if you make them your business you do it at the peril of twisting and contracting your personality.

If social success is to be yours then we shall both be grateful for it, but if it is not to be yours we shall both have the satisfaction that it was lost in a higher cause.

There is something better than success, and that is to deserve it.

But I am certain the men with whom you and I come into contact are not such shams as to cast out one who is brave enough to be true to himself, and gracious enough to accept the consequences with genial good-will.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## Larger Meaning of Religion

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### XV

#### THE LARGER MEANING OF RELIGION

DEAR FATHER :

You have helped me to throw off a great burden from my mind, for I had not seen anxiety concerning one's influence in the light in which you put it.

I begin to realize the meaning of freedom from fear, regarding which you spoke to me on several occasions. For when one is living conscientiously and shuts out from his thoughts questions as to how his life and actions appear to others, there springs up from within a new sense of joy and quiet courage. But so long as the opposite attitude of mind dominates one, of always imagining criticisms, and resentments, on the part of associates, there is a miserable feeling of unrest, and of slavery to the moods of those with whom one comes into contact. Your idea of shutting out all foolish imaginings by maintaining a manly concern as to how one is acting towards other people, instead of fearing and suspecting the attitude of others towards him, introduces into one's life new experiences of mental calm and poise. I am entering into the happy realization of it already.



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## The Son's Letter

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There is a question which has been upon my mind to ask you. Why have you not talked to me more about religion in your letters?

I have looked for a religious message, and have been surprised that you, who are a deeply religious man, have not written to me on the subject.

I have felt there must be some good reason for it, but do not quite know what that reason may be.

You give religion the first place in your own life, to such an extent that I was prepared to receive religious counsel, and exhortation, in every letter. And it was your custom to speak to me about it occasionally when I was at home.

Of course, it is true I had a definite spiritual experience before coming to college. You always insisted that you were anxious to have Christianity become something more to me than a mere mental assent to certain statements of belief, before I should leave home.

You contended that belief should become a spiritual reality in my life, to some degree at least, before I went out into the world.

Before I came here, as you well know, I passed from the intellectual perception of Divine realities to a spiritual appropriation of them.

And since coming here, as you also know, I have kept up the habit of private prayer, the devotional reading of the Bible and attendance at church, besides college chapel services.

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## Larger Meaning of Religion

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But while all that is true, I am at a loss to know why you have not enlarged upon religious themes.

Have I shown impatience at any time with any religious counsel you have given me? Or do you not care to discuss religious matters in writing?

I am puzzled, for I find some men talk much more about it than you do; yet I am certain they are neither as good, nor as efficient, nor as useful, as you. I find weaknesses in a few of them which I have never seen in you. And yet they are perfectly sincere men, in fact they are ready to suffer in some directions for their outspokenness. They gain no personal advantage.

What is the meaning of the difference between them and you?

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

You are entirely mistaken when you say I have not written to you upon the subject of religion. If you had said that I had not discussed at length one most important aspect of religion you would have been quite correct in your observation.

I have not said much to you upon the inner side of religion, the devotional, the believing side. Why?

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## The Father's Reply

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For three main reasons. First, because I knew you already had an experience of the great verities of religion, and that you were keeping up your inner life by devotional habits.

My second reason was on account of the fact that we have discussed on previous occasions the inner side of the spiritual life, and you have my thoughts on that subject with you.

The third reason for not dwelling upon the devotional side of the inner life was my urgent desire that you should translate, into your ordinary duties, all that you learned from prayer, the study of the Scriptures, and attendance at the services of the church.

Religion and common life are not two separate entities; the religion of the inner life cannot be separated from the religion of the outer life.

Religion consists not only in prayer; it means that the man who prays shall also keep his engagements with his fellow men to the minute, it means that he shall use his money as in the sight of God. That he shall be cheerful, chivalrous, dependable. It means that a man's conversation shall be truthful, kind, and wise. It means that his time shall be wisely planned out, and used for useful ends. That his mind shall be concentrated, his thoughts marshalled under a dominating purpose.

Religion has an inner side. And there are times when it is of the highest importance to talk upon

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## Larger Meaning of Religion

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the glorious realities of that aspect of it. In fact, it is the inner, experimental aspect which is primary. I was greatly concerned that you should let the Divine presence and power enter into the roots of your nature before you should leave home. Because there is no use in talking about fruit until the root is in living contact with the soil. Nothing one may do is spiritual unless the inner life is spiritual. That is why a man's gift of money to any good cause is estimated by the world according to the motive that inspired the gift. A man's inner life must be greater than anything he does.

I knew you had experienced the inner side of religion, and would experience it more and more if you were diligent in practicing the outer aspect of it.

For the outer side is just as important as the inner aspect; and I feared lest you should substitute religiosity for religion, that you should practice the inner function of religion, but neglect to translate it into actual, common facts. I have longed and prayed that you should have a Christian mind, and eye, and tongue, and hand, and pocket, as well as a Christian soul.

But I hear you say: if the inner side, the believing side, the praying side, of the Christian life is right will not the practical, every-day side be also right as a natural consequence?

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## The Father's Reply

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My answer to that is: "Yes and no." "Yes," if the will and mind coöperate with the Divine will and mind in continuing to carry out into actual living what has been whispered in the soul. "Yes," if one realizes that devotional practices are not the end of the religious life but the beginning; that having prayed, the spirit and mind of Christ must flow on through the character into every detail of the day's life and work.

"No," if the human will and mind do not co-operate in the process of allowing the Divine mind and will to have a chance to flow out into the common incidents and experiences of the passing hours.

The spirit of God within us will not usurp the functions of the human personality. He will inspire them, but He will not coerce them.

One sees people who seem perfectly sincere in their devotional life go straight out from it all into the engagements of the day without taking the spirit or the mind of Christ with them. No one would dare say that those people are conscious hypocrites. The trouble is they are earnest largely on their inner side. They are the victims of a partial, broken view of religion. They have their beliefs right, but their beliefs do not get much of a chance to open their purses. They are faithful to their devotions, but not to their appointments. Their prayers seem to be right, but their spirit is not right when they reach the breakfast table. And no

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## Larger Meaning of Religion

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amount of devotion on the inner side of life can make up for the lack of it among the outward facts.

Do not think that I put more emphasis upon the life of action than upon the life of secret devotion, any more than I look upon the fruit of a tree as more important than the root. As it is impossible to get fruit from trees without roots, so it is impossible to obtain Christian character without being rooted in the eternal realities which produce it.

But there seems to be a terrible temptation to refuse to obey the spirit of God within us, when He urges us to go a step beyond the current standards, and sentiments, which we find around us. We are willing to be Christian up to that point to which conventional opinion says we must go. But when that point is reached we are tempted to refuse to go further. So that we become not so much obedient to the spirit of God as to a certain social conscience.

Life, instead of going progressively forward into moral originality and progress, goes round and round the same circle of conduct. There is no fresh contribution to reality. The inner devotional habits are not made the inspiration of outward fearlessness, and fidelity, but they are often made the substitute for fidelity. Just as if an engineer were to substitute the preparation of his locomotive for the journey it should make, for the journey itself.

The need of our time is for men who have the

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## The Father's Reply

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root of the matter in them, to progress in Christian conduct beyond the frontiers of conventional conceptions of duty, to continue to be obedient to the spirit of God after they have reached what convention requires. For the spirit of God has a long and progressive programme for us all, which He reveals hour by hour, and day by day, to all those who are willing to continue to carry the mind of Christ into individual and social life.

The suggestions of the spirit of God within must be translated into the most ordinary, and practical, and trivial facts of life, if the devotional life is to be justified before the eyes of a practical world.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## The Day of Trouble

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### XVI

### THE DAY OF TROUBLE

MY DEAR FATHER :

It all seems a dreadful nightmare.

I cannot believe it is only fourteen days since your telegram came summoning me home, and I am back again at my studies, thinking of you all in our desolated home. It did not seem possible that pneumonia could do its awful work so quickly.

I always felt mother was not strong, but never dreamed that she would be taken from us. The blow fell upon us so suddenly that all through those silent days before the funeral, and after, I seemed stunned. It is only now that I begin to realize what has happened. It seems as if I must go back by the next train to comfort you and my sisters. But as you said at the station, we must try to live our lives as mother would have us live them, with something of the heroism of her spirit.

Now that she is no longer with us, her character seems to shine with a more brilliant lustre than ever. She always appeared perfect to me, but somehow I see her to-day as I never saw her. The



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## The Son's Letter

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loveliness of her life seems to dawn afresh upon my mind. And part of my sorrow is that I had not seen it before.

I am thankful for the hour before dinner which I had with her, all through the summer when I read her favourite books to her; and that I have written to her constantly since leaving home. But I envy you and the girls. You did so much more for her than I. And somehow in the bitterness of my soul I feel as if my supreme chance of doing kind things had gone forever. There is always such a miserable temptation, when the impulse is upon one to say something, or do something, that the heart prompts one to say or do, to postpone it, or to think it silly. But what a shameful mistake such an attitude appears to me to-day. I feel as if it might be easy to walk home over burning ashes, if there could come to me a fresh opportunity to show more tender consideration for mother. But that day is over. And I hope the lesson it brings will not be lost upon me.

It may seem strange to you, but in the attempt to rally my thoughts for my work, it is as if I were not loyal to you all, and to her dear memory, to be back again in surroundings where she never lived, and where her name is not known. While I think of you all quietly living in the rooms that are associated with her life, having everything about you suggest her, it seems almost brutal to be going on

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## The Day of Trouble

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here as if nothing had happened. I have no desire, or intention, to surrender to mere sentimentality, to soft, weak, enervating feelings, but I am anxious and determined, to be loyal in every fibre of my being to the memories of the past, which have now become sacred to me.

It appears to me it would be sheer cowardice to press on with my work, and at the same time shut out from my life the hallowing influences, which speak to me with a force which I never before felt. I can easily see how it might be possible to fling oneself into all kinds of distractions and try to forget, and by so doing not to suffer anything like so much; but at the same time to contract one's deeper nature.

While I despise mere maudlin sentiment on the one hand, I want to equally despise hardness of heart on the other. Your bearing has always seemed to me to be the ideal attitude, and I want it to be mine; to possess strength joined to tenderness. I do not care to have the one without the other. I am convinced it is easy, and it may be cowardly, to possess the one without the other, or perhaps I should rather say, the semblance of strength or tenderness, for one feels it is impossible to have real strength, or real tenderness without having both.

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

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## The Father's Reply

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MY DEAR ARTHUR :

Your letter has done me good. It is exactly the kind of letter I hoped you would write, for it shows me that you are facing the situation in which we find ourselves in the very best way possible. I am proud of you, in your desire to possess strength and tenderness, for these were the very secret springs of your mother's character. She was the incarnation of both. And no one can ever know how miraculous her strength of character was. Every one who came into contact with her felt the fragrance of her tenderness, but somehow people do not ordinarily associate great moral strength with a somewhat frail body.

It is quite natural that you should see your mother's life now as you had not seen it before, and the vision of its moral beauty will grow still more beautiful to you as the days go by. I am passing through the same experience ; while we were very much together and it seemed as if I knew her every thought, it is only now that her spiritual greatness stands out in finished and sublime beauty.

Do not upbraid yourself, my dear boy, for past failures in devotion ; you were a dutiful son, and your mother would have you spend your thoughts not upon regrets, but upon living now as she tried to live. Regrets tend to discourage rather than inspire life. You have enough sorrow without making the burden heavier than it ought to be.

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## The Day of Trouble

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You can still serve your mother, you can still commune with her, by living like her, by putting her ideals, her aims, her cherished hopes, into your life.

The language between us and her is not now words but deeds. We speak to her when we act like her, or as she would have us act. Bear in mind, when you are trying to do as she would have you think and act, that in those actions you are just as really talking with her as if you spoke to her. You will not have the same mental satisfaction in it, but try hard to make the actual bond between you and her a real one, nevertheless. For she is not far away. There is no such thing as distance in the life of the spirit. Then, too, do not let your mind get into the habit of pitying her. Never say to yourself : " Poor mother."

To do that is to bring elements into your sorrow that should not be in it. She does not need any of our pity ; she never needed it less than at this moment. She has gloriously won her battle. She has entered into the larger, fuller knowledge of the Eternal. She is free from her physical limitations, her pure soul has joined the company of all those who live in the eternal light. She knows more intimately her Lord whom her soul loved with a passionate devotion. And as you and I live our present life in that unseen world, we have fellowship with her in the present hour.

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## The Father's Reply

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Do not let your imagination picture her as far away. She would be far away, if you and I were not trying to live as she lives. In the higher world similarity of character means nearness, while dissimilarity in character means distance. We are separated only as we insist upon living upon lower levels, with lower aims. The great question is not, shall we know each other by and by? it is rather: do we know each other now? Is there a spiritual bond between us and our loved one, are we striving for the same type of life? That is the guarantee of nearness now, and of all the blessings that shall come to us later on.

You are entirely right in your determination to live under the spell of your daily tasks, and also under the influence of your mother's memory. They can, together, make you more of a true man; together, they will deepen and strengthen your personality. And all the more so because it is more difficult to keep under the spell of both influences at the same time. It would be easy to stay at home and give oneself up to moping, but the very thought of such a thing is repellent. It is unwholesome, weak, cowardly.

The person who would give himself up to that kind of thing could never be of any real use to other people in times of trouble. His sympathy would be so weak, and emotional, as to be a real trial, rather than a comfort.

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## The Day of Trouble

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We instinctively shrink from the man who has no power of emotional control. He has not been sufficiently tempered in the furnace of discipline, he is not enough of a man to have earned the right to open his lips when others are in trouble.

On the other hand, it is quite possible to shut out the higher influences such as pull at one's heart-strings, to draw down an iron door as it were against them, to furiously go on with one's work, and to become engrossed in it. It is possible to drown every overture that speaks from the higher aspect of life, and to lash oneself into forgetfulness. This may be done by various means, by means totally different in their character, but producing the same result. One man does it by so high a means as work; he may goad himself on, taking time for nothing in order to forget; another man may do it by an altogether different, and lower, means. The result is a certain hardness which often passes for strength. But it is not real strength. While it is as hard, it is also as brittle, as cast iron. If that man ever gives way, he breaks all to pieces.

Besides, that unnatural hardness robs life of its real charm, of its finer side; it destroys the human touch of pure sympathy. It makes life metallic; if everybody lived like that the heavens would seem to be as brass. There would be no such thing as sentiment, and sentiment is a vastly dif-

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## The Father's Reply

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ferent thing from sentimentality. It is the difference between a horse pulling a load, and one that has run away, overturning the load into the street. True sentiment is the fragrance of the flower of life.

Your idea is the right one, to mix sentiment with duty, to let the influence of your mother's memory refine and deepen your life, while you give yourself faithfully to your work. Do not let the one shut out the other. The expansion of your manhood needs both. It is the assimilation of both which tempers character, which goes to make a true gentleman in the highest sense of that much abused word.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## The Influence of Trouble

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### XVII

#### THE INFLUENCE OF TROUBLE UPON CONDUCT

MY DEAR FATHER:

I am going on with my life just as before, bringing into it all the inspiration which comes to me from mother's example and influence. Her presence grows in vividness and nearness, so much so, that I can almost hear her urge me to go forward into everything that is worthy. The thought gives me a new zest in my work, and in my companionships. It seems as if a new desire to go patiently into details has taken hold of me. The great thing is not to get things done merely, but to try to do them as artistically as possible.

It came to me the other night when I was putting away my clothes, to do it thoroughly, to put them on the stretchers, to fold my things away. It never occurred to me before that trivial acts like that, done with quiet leisureliness, tended to give poise and insight into how to do more important things. There is such a temptation always dogging my steps to do things merely in a half decent way. You could not say my desk was kept in a beastly condition, but then it was never really in order. My things have not been flung about anywhere, especially since



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## The Son's Letter

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we had the talk about the margin of time, but at the same time they were not disposed of with complete care.

And I am beginning to see that it is necessary to give these small matters the undivided attention of the mind, as well as more important matters, not for the sake of the things, but for the sake of my own character. I am discovering that patient, deliberate thoroughness in trifles helps to create that calm bearing, and steadiness of nerve which help to keep one from getting excited or irritable. I begin to see that part of the reason for having occasionally lost control of myself has been the nervous disturbance, and waste, caused by eagerness for the next thing, while trying to do with a divided mind the thing in hand.

Another thing that has come to me quite lately is the desire to have a deeper consideration for my fellow men. Somehow since our great sorrow I feel as if every man was fighting a hard battle. I seem to read pathos in human eyes where before there sometimes appeared to me only selfishness.

The change is not in the eyes of my fellows but in me. It was my selfishness that read selfishness. A new, glad, patient interest in people I hope has been born in me. Every man is greatly worth while being interested in. I could not have said that honestly a month ago.

There is a new tone of reality in the human voice

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## The Influence of Trouble

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as I listen to it to-day, the things which concern others have assumed a new significance in my mind. Every man's life history is just as important as mine, and in most instances, a great deal more so. And when I hear of trouble the word has assumed an entirely different meaning.

How much shallow sympathy I have uttered even in my short day! It was not insincere, but it was uninformed; my toy sympathy did not meet the case. It was like my old toy locomotive being coupled to a real train of loaded cars. Somehow, I think perhaps it may now be possible for me to be of some use to a fellow when he is in trouble, at any rate I know just how he feels. He will command my reverence, and anything else in my power.

Your affectionate son,  
ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

Your letter informs me that you are traveling the road of all healthy-minded men who suffer. Your trial is helping to make you a man from centre to circumference. For all real fresh starts in life, on the human side, begin in the determination of the will to demand thoroughness in the trifles which are nearest at hand. When a fire is kindled it is the paper and the wood which ignite first, and then the coal. The trifles in life are the

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## The Father's Reply

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paper and the wood, the larger affairs are the coal. It is common sense not to apply the match to the coal, to the larger affairs of life, first, and yet that is what many do, and then wonder why there is no real change in the situation. When you begin with the arrangement of your desk and of your clothes, you are following the right method; it is in that way the fire of a new enthusiasm is kindled. After that I am quite prepared for what you say regarding your new interest in, and sympathy for, your fellow men. Bear in mind that your new conscientiousness in trifles is not without its relation to the larger matters of sympathy.

Life is a unity. One act of genuine living leads to another. One act in one department of life affects every other department of life. Fidelity in folding your clothes is definitely related to every other fidelity in the day's work. Just as physical science is seeking to realize a unity in knowledge of the physical world, so true Christianity is seeking to achieve a unity in the realm of conduct in the human world. As the influence of a pebble thrown into a lake moves forward towards the opposite shore, so an act at one spot in your life sends a tremor of inspiration, or depression, through your whole character.

I rejoice in your new interest in your fellows, and shall watch for its outgrowth with the keenest concern. For such sympathy must go forward into

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## The Influence of Trouble

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the problems of social reality. Sympathy in the heart must make terminal connections with the plain, rude facts of human existence. It is not enough for an educated man to feel kindly ; that is the right starting point, to be sure, but kindly feeling must pass along the hard road of attempting to reach social results. It is not enough to help a poor fellow on the street, or through a charity organization society ; we must try to find out what brought him to the point of starvation, and we must probe those conditions which broke him.

The kindly feeling which does kind acts quietly and humbly may be beautiful, but if it stops there you may encourage a class of people who prey on kindly feelings. If it stops there, it is possible for good men to spend their strength and means merely upon the superficial problems of society, without removing the root causes of social trouble. Think of the thousands of noble men and women in London, and New York, who are spending themselves without stint in trying to grapple with poverty and disease ; but unless the situation is handled scientifically, unless serious and large concerted attempts are made to reach the causes of poverty and of disease, the work that those noble souls are doing will have to be done over and over again. There will be no satisfying sense of permanent social achievement, of real moral progress.

So that it seems to me one of the supreme les-

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## The Father's Reply

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sons which young men in your position to-day should learn is that kindly feeling must be joined to hard thinking. If those gracious sentiments of your heart are to reach the seat of the trouble of the world, your mental life is going to be taxed to the utmost. And surely it is a noble use of the human intellect.

Between ourselves, I am seriously thinking of handing over the responsibilities of my business to my partners, within a year or two, so that I may spend the rest of my life upon those very problems which were dear to the heart of your mother. I am not greatly needed in business now, my partners are extraordinarily able men, and there seems no serious reason why I should continue in the same line of work to the end of the chapter. There would be a sense of pride, of course, in having you work into my place. But that is not a large enough reason for me to postpone the carrying out of a solemn conviction, especially when it is considered that when the right time comes, you may not care to enter my office; and if you should care, my partners will see to it that you have the fullest possible opportunity.

When a man has no financial concern for his family, and after spending his years beyond middle life in a business which may no longer vitally depend upon him, the question may well arise in one's mind as to whether he has fulfilled his obli-

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## The Influence of Trouble

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gations to the raw, sad, struggling social problems of his time.

I would not think of retiring in the ordinary sense ; that would be both cowardly and foolish. But at my time of life, before I am too old to be of real use, it seems to me the time is at hand for me to try to turn kindly feelings towards my fellow men into hard thinking upon the awful social problems which are still far from being solved. Nor do I feel this to be in any sense an attitude of grace on my part ; it is rather an obligation and a high privilege. I need not remind you that this information, for the present, is a strictly private matter ; you are not even to hint at it in the remotest way in your letters to your sisters.

We must bear steadily in mind at this time that our heart-breaking sorrow must not invade the lives of other people. That would be pure selfishness. This world has troubles enough of its own, and so has every man in it. You and I have learned to carry our trouble in an altogether different direction. And since that is the case, we must be strong enough to come before the world to pity, and encourage, and not to be pitied.

We must summon ourselves to be at our best in all our social relations. It is not enough to feel kindly and interested in our hearts ; we must make the effort to manifest it in our voice, our handshake, in our whole expression and bearing.

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## The Father's Reply

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I am not pleading for hypocrisy, for outward expressions which have no genuine counterpart within. Such acting tends to degrade character, to make every part of a man's life ring false with insincerity. And the world is quick to detect the false note. That is the reason some are so blunt and disagreeable; they think they have settled the matter when they say they will not be hypocrites. But they have no right to be either hypocrites or bores. They have an obligation to rise above their feelings, to feel right towards the world as well as to translate it into action.

You and I owe the world a gracious bearing and gracious behaviour, and we dare not drown that bearing in the sea of our personal trouble. The man who is not willing to give what the world has a legitimate right to expect, has forgotten an important part of true self-expression.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## The Optimistic Spirit

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### XVIII

#### THE OPTIMISTIC SPIRIT

MY DEAR FATHER:

I believe it to be one's duty to meet the world cheerfully, and to strive to have good cheer in the heart as well as in one's manner. But I do not see how it can be done under all circumstances.

So many people carry a depressing atmosphere about with them, even when they appear to be in circumstances which their friends envy.

There is not a great deal of joy, and enthusiasm, amongst those who are living under the most advantageous conditions. There is apt to be a heaviness, and solemnity, which spreads a contagion of lifeless formality.

Where there is an external gaiety of manner such as one sees in society, one has the feeling that it lacks something. It does not come up to the standard of the genuine article. It is like some wonderful artificial flowers; they look remarkably like the real ones, but they are without the fragrance.

And somehow while there are always abundant signs of good humour, piquant jokes, smiles, and great energy, one misses the fragrance of a rich happiness in most lives.



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## The Son's Letter

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The nearest approach to the beaming, fragrant kind of happiness, which one sees, is in a girl's eyes when you guess there is a secret back of it. And later on one discovers the guess turns out to be the truth.

If those who are living under blue, radiant skies of material and social advantage scarcely can keep their heads above the waters of depression, it is surely vain to expect anything but abject gloom from those who are living under leaden skies, and are pierced through by the biting winds of adversity.

And yet when I read the biography of some hard pressed soul who endured solitude, and bitter hostility, in desperate surroundings, with a triumphant faith; and when I read the Bible, I am persuaded there is the possibility of far greater happiness, and zest, and contagious joy in living, than we ordinarily see.

And the experience does not appear to be largely dependent upon favourable circumstances. What I would like to know is the principle upon which this higher type of happiness is cultivated.

If such a thing is possible for the few, it ought to be available for the many. It cannot be merely a matter of temperament, although temperament probably has something to do with it.

Since God has implanted this thirst for happiness in us, since the optimistic outlook is necessary to

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## The Optimistic Spirit

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the highest kind of achievement, since we are so beneficially affected by it when we are under the spell of it, even in a book, it certainly should be within the reach of more people than possess it.

I would like to have it, not only for the sake of personal satisfaction, but in order to be at my best for my work, and for my friends. For I am certain that those who have the genuine optimistic spirit can bring a warmth, and radiance, into the social atmosphere which nothing else in this world is able to produce.

You have always had it in a greater measure than anybody I know, and I wish you would tell me the secret of it.

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

It seems to me that temperament is the explanation of the optimistic spirit in the experience of some. But in others that spirit is manifested in spite of a temperament, which may tend towards a pessimistic outlook. While temperament will always remain as a tendency in human nature, the activity of such tendency may be modified or cancelled by the introduction of other elements into the life. As the activity of a tendency towards bronchitis is overcome by a favourable

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## The Father's Reply

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climate, so the same principle holds true in the life of the human spirit.

Many men and women have demonstrated the triumphant conquest of inherent tendencies of character by living in the bracing atmosphere of spiritual realities. And they are witness to the fact that their victories were not in any sense to be explained by favourable surroundings, for so often the testimony comes from those whose circumstances were altogether hostile to the production of such a state of mind.

What then are some of the conditions of the sanguine spirit?

I would emphatically say the first element is a persistent faith in the indwelling presence of the spirit of God as an active, coöperating partner, within the soul, for the conduct of life.

The attitude of mind which secures this conviction of the actual, aggressive presence of the Spirit of God consists in a concentrated, sustained affirmation of the fact. It will be necessary to wrestle with moods, and suggestions, and feelings, which contradict, and pour contempt upon the bold venture of faith.

But the man who would possess the optimistic spirit in its full strength must maintain the attitude of unbroken assurance that the spirit of God is actually at work in his soul seeking to accompany him into the details of every-day life. This habit

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## The Optimistic Spirit

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of mind will of course require continual practice, but there is no exercise of the thought and will which is so fraught with far-reaching and uplifting consequences. The day in which one lets that truth grip him, and hold him, may be a day of glorious transition from the winter of discontent into the spring time of a new enthusiasm.

I should say the second element in the cultivation of the sanguine spirit consists in an unfaltering belief that obedience to the suggestions of the Divine Spirit, in the path of duty, achieves the fulfillment of our part of His plan for our lives. That, too, is a daring venture of faith. There may be nothing whatever to corroborate the assertion, no message from our fellow men, no clear, immediate vision of definite achievement which satisfies our own reason, for the time being.

But faith is content to take a short view of life; it is willing to take it in sections, being convinced that it is impossible for one to actually see the larger, fuller meaning of his life while he is in the thick of it. It is not till later, when he shall look back to see it in the clearer light of completion, that he may have the satisfaction of seeing the full purpose and design which lay behind the various details and sections of his activities.

If one can believe that the work he is doing to-day at this hour, so far as he is able to grasp it, is God's will for him, he is resting upon something

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## The Father's Reply

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which contributes to the making of the optimistic spirit.

A third element which, it seems to me, must have a place in the cultivation of such a spirit is the conviction that it is possible to put through what one has in hand to do, that the same Spirit who suggests to us also coöperates with us in the achievement of what is suggested. If the mind is concentrated in its attention, if it is undivided, if it does not listen to paralyzing whispers which proclaim the task to be impossible, if the attention is doggedly fixed in confident, unbroken activity, the imagination goes ahead of the actual work in hand to visualize victory, to boldly see the thing which is being done, already mentally achieved. And it is when imagination paints the picture of success that all the other mental powers are drawn out into the task of bringing things to pass. This glowing faith in one's power to achieve because God is coöperating in the ventures of one's daily life, is a substantial element in the optimistic spirit.

There is a fourth element which seems to me to be essential to a radiant optimism : to believe in a loving ultimate purpose of God as being behind and above the mysteries, the paradoxes, the sorrows of life. It is just here that the modern mind finds it hardest to assent. The recognition of the reign of law, the new light upon the life story of the uni-

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## The Optimistic Spirit

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verse, in its vast and minute phases, make it difficult for the sensitive mind of our age to fit a belief in Divine love into the scheme of things, as it appears to modern eyes.

Here again, even after the most profound explanations are made by the wisest men in the world, even after the most ingenious attempts at elucidation, there must be the exercise of an heroic effort of faith. It is impossible to get away from it, if one is to have an optimistic outlook. There must be a determined resolution to trust, rather than to question. One must make up his mind that it is a higher exercise of the human personality to trust than to doubt, to be willing to leave the inscrutable problems which haunt the mind. For to cling to the simple intuitions of a trusting soul is the only way out of the dense clouds of mystery.

If we refuse to take up this position, if we insist upon fighting our intellectual way through every phase of the torturing puzzle there can be little hope for the optimistic outlook. And such an intellectual attitude is too much for you and me. We have not the mental equipment, nor the time, to make any headway in it. The problems, the enigmas, of the universe would exhaust our mental capacity before we had passed the fringe of the inquiry. And that is true not only of ourselves; I cannot think of a living man who would profess himself to be competent to handle the matter.

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## The Father's Reply

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There are therefore only two alternatives open to plain men like you and me : trust or doubt. Trust means mental peace, it means joyous living, it means rising up into a sense of achievement, of filling a place in a universal plan. Trust makes it possible to fit one's life into things as they are, with an assurance of a victorious climax. While unbelief will leave the soul unsatisfied ; it may mean the collapse of enthusiasm, the death of intelligent purpose in the struggle of life.

It is for us to choose which shall make us more efficient, more useful, more satisfied men.

There is one more element which I would mention as forming a part of the spirit of optimism, and that is the maintaining of the spirit of love in our lives as a working principle in conduct. Since we believe that the Spirit of God is within us to express the Divine mind and will through us, the supreme element in that expression is love. It is therefore the spirit of love which is seeking a right of way through our personality.

I have mentioned these five elements as being essential to the carrying out of the joyous, sanguine, optimistic attitude towards life. There are other elements which we might very profitably consider, but I have endeavoured to place before your mind some of the main principles out of which the others grow.

I do not forget that the summoning of the will ;

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## The Optimistic Spirit

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the cultivation of a sense of humour; keeping the physical life in a sound condition by exercise and self-control; the diversion of a wholesome hobby, all play their important part in helping one to rise into the optimistic temper.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.



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## The Son's Letter

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### XIX

#### TRANSLATING IDEAS INTO CHARACTER

MY DEAR FATHER:

I mentally grasp the five elements which you consider necessary in order to experience something of the optimistic spirit as a working force in life. But I dare not say that I have spiritually assimilated the ideas. It is one thing to see truth intellectually and even to heartily assent to it; but to be able to use it as part of one's moral capital in living is quite another matter.

And I perceive it to be the practical problem before me, to learn how to turn what has been put before my mind as an idea, into that which is actually possessed by my spirit as character.

I must get the ideas to sink into my deeper life, instead of floating on the surface of my mind. That is not quite as easy as it may appear.

In fact, it is the difference between mentally seeing an idea, and living it, that is the whole trouble everywhere, as it appears to me.

Many have magnificent opportunities of listening to brilliant and original thoughts, beautifully expressed, year in and year out. And they talk with enthusiasm about the things to which

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## Translating Ideas into Character

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they have the privilege to listen. One would expect to see very high types of character as a result of such opportunities. One naturally looks for a striking difference in their lives, from those who have not had the same advantages. But the difference is by no means always evident. On the contrary, the net result in practical life is sometimes quite disappointing. Conduct remains tame, and small, and selfish, notwithstanding the years of conspicuous privilege in hearing the highest principles of life clearly and forcefully proclaimed.

The same disparity between knowledge and conduct is sometimes seen in the case of an omnivorous reader. He appears to read everything, to have become acquainted with every kind of theory. His mind is up to date upon almost every phase of thought. One is prepared to see as a consequence an impressive and unique type of character. But he may find instead an exceedingly ordinary type of character, with glaring weaknesses in the actual conduct of life. The mind may be in the twentieth century, while the heart lives in a dark bygone age.

So that what one may hear concerning truth, the ideas he may even clearly visualize to his own mind, give no guarantee that they will be mixed into the substance of life.

I am anxious to guard against the danger of substituting mental assent to truth for character. I

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## The Father's Reply

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would like to be kept from surrendering to the temptation of merely running after new ideas for their own sake, without having a definite and earnest purpose of translating them into my own spirit and conduct.

It seems to me to be a futile kind of existence, this mere hunger for something brilliant, and profound, without the slightest concern as to how to fit it into one's way of living.

I suppose it is possible for people to become drunkards on ideas as well as on alcohol, to mentally tittle upon high themes for the sake of the mental exhilaration, rather than for inspiration to live the highest possible kind of life.

I would like you to tell me how in your judgment it is possible to transmute ideas into moral reality. For I do not care to grow faster in the knowledge of spiritual reality than I am able to turn the knowledge into life. For if I do, I may get into the way of thinking that learning about high concerns is a sufficient substitute for living them out.

Your affectionate son,  
ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

I cannot claim to have lived up to my highest light. I do not think that even the best of men

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## Translating Ideas into Character

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would be so bold as to say they had always been true to the call of the highest.

I remember standing by the Lake of Geneva on a glorious day looking up towards the summit of Mont Blanc, which seemed so near, and accessible, as the late afternoon sun glorified the eternal snows ; I heard a little girl say to her father : “ Let us go up to the top of Mont Blanc and play in the snow.” And there are some who talk like that in regard to the immaculate summits of moral attainment.

But it is the experienced climber who knows the treacherous difficulties of the ascent, both on the Alps and in moral endeavour.

At the same time, I heartily believe in the sanguine spirit, the optimistic outlook, so long as it recognizes the actual facts of life. And the sanguine spirit may be cultivated in the presence of the most vivid understanding of the difficulties confronting all of us, if we maintain a firm grasp of the spiritual resources which are at our command.

And this is your problem ; you are concerned to make spiritual truth part of your elemental self, and not a mere apprehension of your intelligence. While keeping the realities of the world clearly in view, you are keen to possess in your soul the counterbalancing eternal resources, instead of only mentally visualizing them.

The transmutation of a mental vision of truth into moral energy in character requires a recogni-

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## The Father's Reply

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tion of the time element. You are familiar with the idea of a time exposure when you have taken photographs. I have heard you say when you were particularly anxious to have a distinct picture, that you lengthened the time exposure. And I have also heard you say that you had ruined pictures, which you had looked forward to possessing, by unconsciously taking photographs of two different scenes on the same plate. One must bear in mind that both the time element, and one photograph for one plate, have their counterpart in the facts of the inner life.

We are constantly tempted to neglect the time exposure idea, in regard to the assimilation of truth. We are impelled to allow one aspect of truth after another, to make its faint impression upon the mind, until there is no vivid, intelligible, recognition of anything. The mind is a photographic plate, as it were, which has had a composite picture of a variety of ideas impressed upon it. In our hurry to obtain a large number of mental impressions, no single idea has had its legitimate chance.

There is a tendency to make a fetish of the acquisition of ideas, without an adequate concern for their permanent distinctness, and safety, in the camera of the mind. We take far more mental photographs than we have plates on which to clearly image them. The result is that in our eagerness to ac-

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## Translating Ideas into Character

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quire everything we possess nothing. The effectiveness of one idea has been cancelled by the rapid introduction of another.

We must discriminate as to the ideas we shall allow to take possession of our mind, as a man who hopes to retain his physical health does in regard to his food. A large quantity of food is not a guarantee of physical fitness, it very probably will be the guarantee of quite the reverse.

There must be a recognition of the time element in order to assimilate ideas into the elemental life. One must try to practice what was called "recollection" in a former age. The affairs of the world crowd too much upon us even when we are alone.

The high principles, and august facts, which should be woven into life, like mathematics in a bridge of stone and iron, do not have enough of a chance to grip us. Even when we give up small portions of our time to permit ideas to sink down into character, the process is not successful unless the mind is rigorously concentrated. For whenever a serious thought is before the mind, there are several irrelevant thoughts ready to usurp its place. And oftener than not, the unimportant suggestions succeed in capturing the attention of the mind. In such circumstances no real transmutation of an idea into power can take place. The amount of time given to the mere appearance of reflection does not save the situation from unreality. Concentration

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## The Father's Reply

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of mind is the channel through which mental impressions pass into moral energy.

Of course, it is difficult to find time for reflection, but not quite so difficult as we ordinarily imagine. It is the lack of the appropriate temper of mind which creates most of the excuses of being too busy.

Besides, the supreme meaning of the provision of Sunday as a day of rest is to make it possible for us to spend time in reflecting upon the stupendous unseen realities. It provides the opportunity for attempting to grasp the larger, fuller, richer meaning of life.

Men of old who spoke to their generation the messages which illumined the path of progress were men who meditated. They remained long in the presence of the great spiritual verities. They were not afraid of Sunday quiet, they were not bored by the cessation of the world's work. They were not in a fever of discontent and unrest, because the doors were closed in the streets one day in the week. They were not dependent upon their surroundings for satisfaction; they drank from the fountain of truth. They rejoiced in the silence which made it possible for them to listen to the overtures of the Spirit of God. For they recognized it was an even higher attitude to listen to God than to talk to Him. And they came back to the life of the world with ideas turned into burning

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## Translating Ideas into Character

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convictions, by which they were ready to live, and for which they were prepared to die.

Do not shrink from Sunday quiet. Let your spirit commune with those majestic facts which shall make you strong, and gracious, and optimistic in the midst of the trials of life. Let your satisfactions spring from high thinking, rather than from servile dependence upon outward excitements.

The counterpart of meditation is action. The effort to live out what one has accepted as truth, will make truth a spiritual possession as well as an intellectual perception. It is as ideas are turned into conduct they become permanent elements of character, and not merely fleeting visions of the mind. And more than that, it is in the practice of translating truth into life, that larger areas of truth are conquered by the mind. There is more spiritual knowledge learned through action than by any other means, so that genuine spiritual living both quickens and expands the intellect.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.



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## The Son's Letter

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### XX

#### INTUITION IN CHRISTIAN BELIEF

MY DEAR FATHER:

I shall not forget that time, concentration, and quiet reflection, are factors in the process of turning spiritual ideas into moral strength.

I find that some spiritual truths, which I have been brought up to accept and live by, do not find even intellectual hospitality in some quarters.

One becomes conscious that there is a chill east wind of doubt blowing, and it moans through the minds of a few men of my acquaintance.

One and another have told me quite frankly that they have ceased to hold some of the views which they formerly believed.

This would not make any impression upon me, if all those who made these statements were careless, or distinctly selfish characters. For one can intuitively see that the kind of life a man lives will have a very direct bearing upon his beliefs, as well as the other way about.

I have learned to understand that the tendency of a character powerfully influences the intellectual outlook. The man himself may be entirely unconscious of it, but I have observed a de-

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## Intuition in Christian Belief

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parture from vital belief follow upon a departure from conscientious living.

That is not, however, by any means always the case, for one occasionally encounters a man, who while he is letting go his grip upon his beliefs, so far as can be seen, is at the same time endeavouring to live an earnest, useful, life.

Some of the doubts which are expressed are not at all serious; they appear to me to arise out of a lack of discernment as to what is of primary importance, and what is of secondary importance.

But all the doubts which I have heard expressed cannot be placed in that class. They concern what is most vital and fundamental, for my own spiritual life, at any rate.

The question which I wish to put to you is: should I fight through these intellectual difficulties, should I try to reason out to my own satisfaction the perplexities which I hear put forward, or should I shut out the suggestion of difficulty, as one would fight the beginnings of a fire?

I do not wish to be an intellectual coward, nor do I desire to be an intellectual suicide.

I would like to take my stand as a man among men, upon the intellectual aspect of religion as well as in other matters.

I know the supreme importance of my faith for the conduct of my actual, every-day life. It equips me for living, it gets work out of me which I could

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## The Father's Reply

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not get out of myself, it inspires me in the face of difficulty, and pacifies mental revolt in the presence of mystery ; it gives zest and meaning to life when nothing else has a message for a plain man.

I recognize all that, with increasing vividness, but I would like to know what is the really manly attitude towards the intellectual aspect of the religious situation. Does it consist in taking refuge from difficulty, as one would seek shelter in a storm, or does the heroic attitude demand that one shall think the whole thing through, until he has conquered every mental obstacle ?

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR :

Some men do not know where the channel of the river of truth lies, and because of that, their ship of faith goes aground on a shallow sand-bank. They wreck their boat on deposits of theological soil, which the centuries have carried down into the stream of religious belief. They have not a clear idea in their minds as to what is channel and what is sand-bank in the river of truth.

It makes my heart glad to think that you see there are some problems in belief, regarding which you need not concern yourself, so long as you cling

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## Intuition in Christian Belief

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to those great primary facts out of which your spiritual experience has come.

You evidently have a definite understanding in your own mind as to the vital realities in religion, over which you must keep guard. You comprehend that there are some difficulties regarding which you do not consider it necessary to enter into a discussion. They are not pillars upon which the structure of belief rests.

According to conversations we have had in the past, your faith rests upon the personality of Christ as the revelation of eternal reality. He is a presence. You do not seek to define Him, you try to know Him, to listen to Him, to obey Him.

His personality stood before you as a challenge. And when you responded, it was something in you, deeper even than your reason, which rose to His appeal. It was your whole nature, of which your reason is only a part, which consented.

It was your intuitive, elemental, self which ventured to trust and obey Him. And that intuitive sense, in the most various types of men, in most widely separated centuries, in the most opposite kinds of civilization, has recognized in Christ the supreme message of God to the soul.

But I emphasize that it was your intuitive sense which listened to the call of Christ; it was not a mere section of your being, it was your whole personality focussed into a unity of self-expression,

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## The Father's Reply

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and the intuitive sense is the first point of contact between the human spirit and outside reality.

The pioneer function of the intuitive instinct is a practical fact in other spheres of life besides religion. The love which one feels towards another is an expression of something deeper than reason. The admiration which one has for a beautiful landscape springs from the intuitive sense. When you trusted and began to follow Christ it was the exercise of this same faculty and principle.

The crux of the question is whether the sublime spiritual presence to whom your elemental life has gone out, is a presence who is in any way contradicted by that section of your being which you call your rational life. Does your reason contradict your spiritual intuition in regard to Christ?

For if there is an actual contradiction, there can be no spiritual reality. Life is a unity, and what we comprehend intuitively can never be really contradicted by reason.

Intuition is not afraid of reason, in the region of religion, any more than it is afraid of it in love, or art, or in the contemplation of the beautiful in nature.

Some people think that reason contradicts spiritual intuition, simply because intuition cannot wholly explain itself, cannot wholly rationalize its conclusions, cannot rationally demonstrate its convictions. But such inability does not reduce the exercise of faith to unreasonableness. If that were

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## Intuition in Christian Belief

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true nobody would love, without being an intellectual expert at proving its rationality. None would dare to live under the spell of the beautiful in nature or art without being able to give a reasoned reason for admiring the beautiful. But one does not act in that way ; he may be hopelessly unable to reason out the reasonableness of his affection, or his sense of the beautiful, or a hundred other things. And yet he does not let that candidly admitted fact interfere with his enjoyment of what to him is of the essence of reality.

Very few men, indeed, have the power to rationalize their intuitive conclusions, in religion or in anything else. That is not a dogmatic utterance of mine ; it is a perfectly plain, self-evident, statement of fact. The simple reason for being unable to reduce their intuitional convictions to rational demonstration is because of their lack of mental equipment, and training, and time, which would be necessary for the task.

So that your intellectual attitude towards the spiritual realities of your faith will depend upon the ability of your mind to handle the questions involved.

It is not at all a question of courage ; it is a matter of mental strength. If one should be challenged to lift a ton weight, it would not be a sign of cowardice if he refused, it would simply be a decision of common sense, and there might be great courage in the exercise of it.

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## The Father's Reply

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The attempt to perform an impossible feat would probably result in serious injury or death, and the effort would neither be an exhibition of heroism nor wisdom.

But for one who has the mental equipment, the training, the time, to mentally deal with the intellectual aspect of the fundamental problems of religion the whole situation is entirely different. What might be mental heroism on his part would be foolhardiness on the part of another, who has no such apparatus to put the work through.

Every man has a perfect right to face any, or every, problem for which he has the strength of mind, the training, and the time by which to be able to handle all the facts in the case.

When he does not possess these qualifications, he does not therefore surrender his convictions, so long as it is not proved to his satisfaction that what he clings to is irrational. For it is one thing to hold a conviction which is, for the time being, beyond one's power to rationally demonstrate; it is quite another thing to have it proven to one that what he believes is not intellectually tenable. And so long as the supreme fact of your faith cannot be assailed as irrational, it is your privilege and duty to cling to it with tenacity.

Besides, the burden of proof is upon the man who would rob you of your convictions.

Before I close let me turn to an altogether different aspect of your religious beliefs.

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## Intuition in Christian Belief

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You know something of the progress, in the life of the world, which the living Christ has achieved through His faithful disciples, throughout the centuries; you know how much He has done for your own spirit. There is therefore an obligation resting upon you to pass on what you have received. The law of progress demands it. You have received treasures from the sacrifice and industry of the past; you must give to the future what is making you all that you are. Since we recognize the principle of giving to posterity in unbroken beauty, so far as we are able, the highest and noblest achievements which have been handed down to us in architecture, literature, art, music, and every other sphere of worthy enterprise, surely the same principle applies, with even greater force, in the realm of religion. For it is religion which provides the foundations upon which all the other achievements of history rest, and which is the only real guarantee of their preservation.

Your personality must give its contribution to the sum of spiritual reality, which the present age shall bequeath to the coming generation. And I pray that your contribution may be such that, if all men were to do likewise, the near future would witness the universal coming of the kingdom of God upon earth.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.



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## The Son's Letter

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### XXI

#### SELF-GIVING, OR GETTING?

MY DEAR FATHER:

We have discussed the place which the various influences in my surroundings here may have upon the deepening and expansion of my life.

You have helped me to understand that these influences can be made effective only as I have sufficient spiritual life in the depths of my being, to be able to assimilate them into a growing character.

I realize as never before that my true self must be free from every weakening habit, which would hinder self-expression in the highest sense.

You have given me sufficient reasons for retaining in undisturbed simplicity, the bond of fellowship with the living Christ. And you have brought home to my mind the obligation, which rests upon me, to carry forward into the life of the world, the treasures which the sacrifice and enterprise of the past have given to us to pass on to the future.

If I can keep steadily before my mind that my main business in living is to make as complete as possible, my contribution to society of that which I have received, I shall have found a sufficient motive for life.

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## Self-Giving, or Getting?

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But if I must carry into the mighty river of the world's flowing life, what has been given me to convey to it, I must make my life a stream that is constantly bearing all that it has to give, rather than a stagnant pool which retains everything for itself.

And such an attitude appears to me to be the guarantee of joyous personal satisfaction.

I have a distinct conviction that the life of mere getting, of hoarding, of living for selfish gratification, is a ghastly failure.

There are men who have, and who do not possess. They have seized what they desired, and they have lost the capacity to enjoy it in the process. One thinks he can see in their faces the look of disappointment, that they have been tricked in their shrewd game.

If one has enough to live upon, without caring about display, or social ambition and rivalry, he has solved the problem of personal necessity. And I have made up my mind to try to be content with that through the coming years. For the game of acquiring, and the strain of striving for things which people do not really need, impresses me as a cruel illusion.

Men never seem to me to be so happy as when they are among the simplicities of existence. There is a sense of having the springs of true happiness choked, when one is in the thick of purely artificial pleasures and pursuits.

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## The Father's Reply

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I have thought it over a great deal, and would really like to live a thoroughly simple life, not merely in regard to material things, but in the more subtle regions of personal ambition, love of place, and power.

I would not be without a healthy ambition, but wish it to move outwards in the direction of service, rather than in the direction of selfish accumulation.

Do not think this is all so unselfish as it may look. For I perceive it to be the happiest kind of life. It is the better end of the bargain. The men who are after fame, and notoriety, and great wealth, impress me as having taken the wrong road to joyous living.

I believe that if I honestly try to live for the common good, all that is best for me may come my way. I have no desire to get a fortune and then to give it away. I would rather live nearer the level of the average man, and do the best I can for the world in the meantime.

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

You strike a deeper note in your letter than I dare profess to have struck in my own life. Your desire to give rather than to get, to such an extent as not to desire wealth, or fame, or power, is a

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## Self-Giving, or Getting?

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noble one. And if you can persist in that temper of mind, as well as work hard, you will have my hearty sympathy. But I must make it very clear to you, that I cannot claim to have stood upon such high ground during most of my life.

I began my business career with a desire to make money honestly, and with fairness to all with whom I came into contact. I have carried out my determination to give away a certain amount, as a minimum every year, and to give as much of my time and strength to good causes as I could spare from my business. While I might have done a great deal more in every direction than I have done, I have not consciously violated my conscience in my dealings with my fellow men.

At the same time, I have sometimes felt the appeal of the higher type of living, such as one witnesses in the man who sacrifices his life for his country, or for the Christian cause in a benighted distant land. I have been conscious that the industrial system, of which I was a part, is not the highest expression of Christian principles.

But I have had no clear light upon a higher way.

The social theories which profess to be a higher way, for the conduct of business, have not so impressed me. The increased human freedom, which their exponents profess to be bound up in those theories, has appeared to me to be an illusion.

Besides, when one finds himself in the midst of

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## The Father's Reply

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a social system which may not be ideal, but with no better at hand, the only thing to do is to go on with it, and make the best use of actual conditions. I have steadily endeavoured to do that, but, as I have already said, not without grave misgivings as to the ethical soundness of the system in which I found myself.

Many men of affairs are as fully convinced as the most extreme social revolutionists, that things as they are do not represent the last word of progress in the world of business. But the honest difficulty in the hearts of multitudes is to find a better system.

It is a great mistake for some men to think that every rich man is the enemy of a downright Christian commercial morality. I have sufficient faith in many of the men I know to believe that, if they were to see clearly new, sound, principles of betterment, they would be willing to make the sacrifices necessary to put them into practice. There is in our day a latent reserve of heroism ready to follow the leader who can convince thoughtful men that his path leads to genuine progress.

In the meantime, if young men like yourself are willing to make sacrifices at the outset of their career, by choosing to serve in those spheres of activity where they can aid in bringing light upon the situation, they can do incalculable good. If by their example, they are willing to so live as to

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## Self-Giving, or Getting?

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help to change the ideals of young men as to the true meaning of success, and the true road to happiness, they can have a hand in giving back the joyous spirit to the national life, and in helping the nation to a higher type of progress.

For I am convinced that much of the social discontent of our time is caused by the senseless, and insolent, and vulgarly advertised, ostentation of modern society.

If there is to be a spirit of national contentment, there must be not only a levelling up of the struggling poor, but a levelling down of the fortunate, and especially in the direction of all kinds of ostentation.

And if this levelling down can take place by a process of voluntary surrender of privileges, and modes of living, to such an extent as to wholly Christianize the ideals of men of your class, a gradual revolution may be wrought in the thought and life of the nation without social convulsion.

Of course, some few heroic souls must take the lead. They must stoop to conquer. They may have to endure misunderstanding, and much criticism, as they cease to pursue prizes which may easily be theirs.

But if there is a clear understanding of the call of the Spirit of God to definite work to be done, and an unreserved willingness to pay the price necessary in order to achieve results, the contagion

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## The Father's Reply

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of their enthusiasm in such pursuits may set fire to the pent-up longing for reality which dwells in tens of thousands of hearts.

And this seems to be the psychological moment for such a venture of faith. There is a very real sense of disappointment with what the world has to offer in the way of satisfaction.

Men and women have not received the measure of happiness which they had hoped for from the pursuits to which they have sold themselves.

I am convinced that if they were to see the real, the unsullied, joys of life in the lives of those who were in an attitude of complete surrender to service, there might be a movement started towards the simplification of the problems of our time which would amaze us all.

But it seems to me that the notes of joy, enthusiasm, high hopefulness, must pervade the personality of those who are to have a hand in the bringing in of a simpler, a more rational, and sacrificial type of living.

It is the fresh, dauntless gladness of self-sacrificing men and women which must act as a dissolving atmosphere upon the hard worldliness of the world.

It is the moral beauty that must shine out through a true life which will make its influence contagious.

The grim, severe type of self-sacrificing character

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## Self-Giving, or Getting?

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will doubtless achieve something, but it is to those who have the secret of radiant hopefulness we must look for that larger influence upon others, which shall win them to higher aims in the living of life.

The future is in the hands of the young men, and if some of them will dare to follow the gleam of light which calls them towards social progress, if they will try to keep themselves free from every entanglement which would compromise their freedom of soul, they may lead us into the promised land of a richer, fuller life. For its satisfactions will consist not so much in the possession of things, but in the possession of a liberated spirit, finding the springs of happiness in our own self-forgetting, industrious, soul.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.



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## The Son's Letter

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### XXII

#### A VOCATION IN LIFE

MY DEAR FATHER:

I was not greatly surprised when you told me some time ago that you were thinking of giving the rest of your life to the service of the larger problems of the world.

Your letter raises the question in my own mind as to what my life-work should be. It is impressed upon me, that if my father, whose judgment I have learned to look upon as sound, thinks it to be a high privilege to give years of his life to the serious and sustained study and service of unsolved social problems, that I could possibly make no better use of the whole of my life than to be engaged in such service. If your business may not need you, then it certainly could not possibly require me.

But I am frankly at a loss to know what factors should enter into the decision as to what sphere of work should engage my attention.

I clearly understand that a man may serve the world in any kind of employment which is a legitimate part of human enterprise, so long as the man himself rings true, and his enterprise is straight and fair.

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## A Vocation in Life

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But you hinted that you were sometimes not sure that the commercial system, of which you are a part, is what it should be. Could I give my humble contribution towards the betterment of that system more advantageously by becoming part of it, or by remaining on the outside of it? That seems to be the primary question which I must answer to my own satisfaction.

If I go into it may I not find myself, sooner or later, in circumstances which shall tend to stultify my convictions? And then there would be no alternative between getting out, or surrendering to the current morality of the business, or of injuring the prosperity of the business of which I would only be an insignificant part.

Of course, the commercial activities of the world must go on. They cannot stop for repairs. But after all is my first obligation to the affairs of commerce, or is it to live up to my highest light?

I am determined not to go into anything into which I cannot bring my supreme motive for living. I would not be content to find myself in circumstances which simply compelled me to go round and round in a treadmill of compromise, which destroyed my aim in life, which held me fast, soul and body, with only one satisfaction: that I was earning money.

I recognize it is necessary to earn money, but there are some other things equally necessary. And since

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## The Son's Letter

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personal freedom is a glorious privilege, which has been earned by the heroism of true and courageous men, I propose to cling to that priceless possession.

I do not want much from the world, and therefore I can afford in some measure to choose my sphere of work. If I were bent upon making a fortune, or a great name, I might have to grasp at the first advantageous offer, without considering very deeply what the step involved. But I want something better than a fortune; I insist upon possessing freedom, inner satisfaction, and a rational goal for my efforts. These are what appeal to me. And such a choice does not smack of saintliness. It is simply an attempt to enter upon the privilege of personal liberty which has been bequeathed by the centuries. Not freedom from work, but freedom to choose my work, and to work all the harder because I may bring my unbroken personality and clean motive into the doing of it.

I quite recognize that usefulness does not depend upon being in any one kind of occupation. Usefulness, as you have taught me to understand it, is first of all a by-product of character.

And yet at the same time there are some occupations that may more directly tend to help the world along than others. There are some departments of enterprise in which, all things being equal, it is possible more definitely to realize one's ideal in the service of humanity.

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## A Vocation in Life

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For one thing, one would have more time to do what he wants to do, and I imagine that is one of the supreme elements in your own decision. You have told me many times, that there were intricate problems which you wished to think through, but because of all the other matters which had prior claims upon your time, you had to pass them on to others.

I would like to give my life to some task in which I could have ample time to really help solve some of the root problems of our day. A deep conviction holds me to the idea that the world cannot really move forward unless men have time to get to the bottom of things. Is not that the reason why science has commanded respect? It has not lived upon annual meetings, and votes of thanks, and thrilling speeches. It has not vindicated itself by having influential men on platforms, and financial magnates dropping in to say a few kind and genuine words, breathless from a round of directors' meetings.

Science has held on its way, and compelled public attention, because men gave their time to problems that were far below the surface. True men of science have been content to live without the applause of public meetings; their inspiration has been the sense of the reality of their work. There has been no fussing, and perspiring, before the eyes of the world, but they have brought things to pass be-

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## The Father's Reply

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cause they had time. They had clear visions as to what they were after, and they pursued their quest in an atmosphere of quiet reality.

I would like to do that sort of thing, in connection with one or other of the aspects of the work for the moral progress of the world.

Your affectionate son,  
ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

You have a very great advantage over the vast majority of young men, in not having to be immediately concerned in the matter of earning a living. They are compelled by the force of circumstances to accept whatever offers them a means of decent livelihood. They have practically no choice; and that limitation, while it has disadvantages, has most valuable advantages. Necessity develops strength, and taps resources, which would lie dormant or become perverted. Necessity has spurred men on to achieve those things which have made this nation what it is. And if you were not the man I believe you to be, you would be compelled to earn your own bread immediately after your studies were completed.

But I recognize that the possession of money has this great advantage: it makes it possible for a man

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## A Vocation in Life

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to choose the sphere in which he shall labour. That, in my judgment, is one of the supreme opportunities which money affords. It helps a man to assert his freedom in selecting his occupation. And that is a very precious privilege. But to turn that privilege into an excuse for doing nothing, or worse than nothing, is the prostitution of a great opportunity. And it is because many men have the impression that the possession of money may excuse them from toil, that money becomes an appalling curse to them, and they themselves in turn become a menace to the welfare of society.

However, I believe with all my heart that you want to work, and to work hard; but you would like to be free to select your place, not for the sake of personal ease, but in the interests of the largest possible effectiveness of your life.

And I am heartily willing to back you up in your search for that sphere in which you can make the best possible investment of your life for the common good.

I believe it would be a real service to problems of our time, if young men, like yourself, were to give themselves to public service rather than to private gain, if you, and many of those who are in similar circumstances, were to give place in the business world to those who are in greater need of the opportunity to earn money, and who cannot exercise the same freedom of choice to select an un-

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## The Father's Reply

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remunerative vocation, in which the prospects of earning a living are likely to be precarious.

It is only fair play, that men who are in a position to be able to venture upon unremunerative efforts for human progress should do so, while they leave the remunerative work of commercial enterprise to those who cannot venture upon the other kind of work, because of their circumstances.

It is as if a man who has no family obligations were to take the place, at the seat of war, of one who had a large family dependent upon him. Why should that same self-effacing spirit not have an opportunity to play its part in the ordinary work of the world? Why should not the sons of rich men, in larger numbers, tackle the unremunerative, thankless, tasks that lie in the way of social regeneration?

Why should they seek to add to a pile which is already large enough for all their needs, while poor men who cannot make ends meet are doing the thankless, miserably paid, pioneer work? And much of it is left undone.

I cordially sympathize with your perplexity of mind in regard to what your life-work should be, and am immensely pleased with the serious consideration you are evidently giving the matter. There is no reason in the world why you should not give your life to helping some phase of the moral progress of the world. As you rightly say,

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## A Vocation in Life

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that can be done directly and indirectly. It can be done in business, and it can be done outside of business.

I believe the time is ripe for larger numbers of men to grip the situation on the frontiers of social change, to clear the way for the men who are struggling in business with present economic conditions. The work of getting the world on the highroad of its true destiny has not had system enough in its prosecution. Men and women have been content to do something, anything, so long as they felt they were in some small degree useful. They have been keen upon having something to do, on doing something, to satisfy their own self-respect, or their own earnest feelings, rather than intent upon definitely going to the very root of the social problem.

The result has been that good work has overlapped to an extraordinary degree, and confusion has reigned because a sufficient number of people have not had time, or capacity enough, to get down to the basic facts. And because there has been no large, serious attempt to systematize the various sections and departments of voluntary work for the betterment of the world, there has been no adequate recognition of the vital relation that one phase of it should maintain to another phase of it. The result is that many of the earnest workers in the work of the world are hostile towards each other, they are suspicious of each other, they think their sphere of-



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## The Father's Reply

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fers the only real work, and those in other spheres are only visionaries or shams.

Take for example the work of the socialists, especially on the continent of Europe ; and the work of the Christian Church. There exists an attitude of mutual dread and suspicion between them. Why ? One reason is that men have not been taught to see the unity of the problem with which they are both wrestling. Their views of the situation are too shallow and too narrow. They are not wholly to blame for that. They have had no time, no training, to see things steadily and to see them whole. They have simply slashed away at what, to them, was of the essence of reality, while they were tempted to look at the other men who were not in their camp as either fools or knaves.

While I am not a socialist, I believe with all my soul that the socialist is working at a terribly real problem. And it is the last word of foolishness for men simply to try to overthrow the arguments of socialism, and let the matter rest there. I personally think those arguments can be overturned, but the real point is that socialists are trying to solve desperate social evils, and many of them are at their task with passionate self-sacrifice, and it is for those of us who are not socialists to have the same burning concern for the solution of those fundamental problems. It is for us to think to the bottom of those questions, and not merely to turn away

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## A Vocation in Life

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to some superficial good, saying we are not socialists.

A plaster of charity is no substitute for a burning fever of deep social trouble. On the other hand, you and I believe with all our hearts in the sublime importance of the work to which the Christian Church is pledged. We believe that the redemption of human character must always underlie every movement towards social advancement. We know, all too well, that even when people get fine houses that does not give them fine characters ; we know that all the scoundrels in the world are not down in the slums. It is only as personal character is changed and inspired that social improvement will have any guarantee of permanence. So that the social and the religious problems are one problem, they can only be solved in the unity of mutual understanding and sympathy. And that unity will be realized and recognized only as larger numbers of men and women have time to think to the bottom of the situation. Hurried, feverish efforts at social redemption have divorced earnestness and common sense. It is men who have method, scientific thoroughness, as well as earnestness, to whom we must look to bring about the great reconciliation.

Whatever the sphere may be which one selects, there are two things which should be steadily borne in mind. The first of these is that the aim must be

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## The Father's Reply

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to unify, to move towards the elimination of waste, both of effort and money, to make everything in one section of enterprise bend towards closer relations with every other section, in the solution of fundamental difficulties. The second thing to be remembered is that the motive in one section of effort must be as high as in any other. If one should choose legislation as his sphere of activity he must as distinctly work for the coming of the kingdom of God on earth as if he were in the Church. It is the lack of the high motive which is in part keeping back the progress of the world. Why is it that so many upright men refuse to touch politics? It is sometimes because they find so many men in politics who are professional time-servers. They are in it with low motives which they would be ashamed to confess. Many high-minded men feel, rightly or wrongly, that it is quite useless for them to face situations which are soaked through with intrigue, and baseness, at least until the time shall come when larger numbers of incorruptible men are ready to coöperate in the task of bringing political life up to the standard which should obtain in work so vital to the cause of human progress. I am not passing an opinion; I am simply stating a fact, and it is because of that fact the social situation remains in its present condition.

The work of all true progress is a unity, and that

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## A Vocation in Life

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being so, the motive in pursuing all progressive work must be as exalted in one part of it as in another.

And wherever the aim towards unity is thwarted, wherever the motive in reaching that aim is low and unclean, there exists treachery to the common good, treachery just as loathsome as where it exists in a soldier selling his country to the enemy for a price.

The difficulty which I see confronting you is not so much that of finding a sphere of usefulness, as whether, when it is found, you will find a sufficient number of men in that sphere ready to risk the security of their positions, and their reputations, in order to turn their convictions into large, concrete, social facts.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## The Son's Letter

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### XXIII

#### CONVICTION AS TO DUTY

MY DEAR FATHER :

I wish the college authorities recognized the need for a chair, or for some other means whereby men like myself might get a bird's eye view of the whole scheme for social progress. One can see at a glance, the elevations and depressions of the Alpine region by looking at a clay miniature of the situation in a Swiss museum. It is an enormous help towards intelligently visualizing the entire locality.

Is such a thing not possible in the realm of social progress ?

It is most interesting and inspiring to hear phase after phase of our social condition, and outlook, and hope, described. But speaking for myself, while one may assent to it all, it appears before the mind as a confused mass. It falls upon one's brain like the torrents of Niagara ; there is so much that the mind, like a cup, cannot get any of the water. It is quite impossible to get a glass of water from the great cataract. And so I find it next to impossible to establish a point of contact with the problems of social progress.

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## Conviction as to Duty

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What I would like to possess is some clear view of the situation, as each section of effort stands related to the other. As it all now appears before my mind, every exponent of every single phase of social work declares that his sphere of enterprise is the one which demands and deserves the first claim to public consideration.

The public mind is not apathetic, it is hopelessly confused. It is not that everybody is indifferent. It is that one enthusiasm cancels the other one, and indifference for many minds is the only refuge from contending forces. It is like a dozen bands all playing at the same time.

It is not from the music people run away. It is from the deafening noise. The music is magnificent, if it could only be heard intelligently. And the people will listen eagerly when some kind of order is established in regard to the playing.

In the meantime great masses of the population are listening to nothing at all. Or if they are listening they hear only a vast clashing of sounds. If I could obtain some intelligent plan which pictured each phase of social service, showing how and where each penetrates the other, and clearly demonstrating the true places of emphasis, it would be an enormous advantage and inspiration.

The workers upon the Panama Canal, I understand, have a plan of the whole gigantic undertaking conveniently put before them, so that they may

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## The Son's Letter

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have an intelligent idea of the place which their particular task occupies in the vast general scheme. Such an arrangement gives zest and rational satisfaction to a worker.

That is what I am after, and thousands of willing men are in the same position. They want to see the relation of their toil and sacrifice to the whole enterprise. They want to be sure that they are not merely going through motions which lead to nothing and nowhere.

I am thoroughly convinced that religion is the fundamental necessity in all genuine social progress and upward change. But then as you pointed out to me in a former letter, religion deals with the inner life, and it deals with the outer life. It has a mission of regeneration in the individual, and also in society. It does its work in a Christian pulpit, through a Christian hospital and school in China, through Christian legislation in a legislative assembly, through the Christian spirit in every phase of corporate life.

I would like to fling myself against the overwhelming problem at its very foundation. And consequently I sometimes think I must go into the Church at home or abroad ; again it comes to me that I should try to live out my life in thinking through social questions, and at another time it strikes me that I should have a hand in legislating just laws for the suffering poor ; at still another time

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## Conviction as to Duty

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I feel as if I should try to live out my convictions in business.

But wherever my lot is to be cast I must have a sense of striking reality, of being free to express the truth that may be in me, and not merely going round in a circle of aimless duty. I assert my sovereign right not to be held down by traditional ways in my work, which may have long since parted company with common sense. The only slavery to which I am willing to indenture myself is that in which I shall, all the time, be consciously serving the progressive common good of the people.

Your affectionate son,

ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR :

I thoroughly sympathize with your perplexity in trying to discover what your sphere of usefulness should be. I am not quite so sure that a university chair, such as you describe, would give you as much help as you imagine. The clearest possible light on the entire social situation, while it would give you mental illumination, would not solve for you the problem of your particular place in the army of workers.

Of course, there must be information, and, if possible, such information as will show how each department of enterprise interpenetrates every other.



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## The Father's Reply

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But you must finally settle the matter of your sphere in your own soul.

Let me suggest that you write down upon paper the things you want to achieve. Keep that paper in your desk, add to it, subtract from it, as the days go by. Do not be carried away by any mere popular tendency. You have decided not to drift into your work; be very careful lest you do that in spite of yourself.

Settle in your own mind where the supreme points of emphasis in service lie.

Is it the individual or society for which you are going to work; or both, and in what proportion of emphasis?

What is it in the individual you seek to help and inspire? What is your main idea in social endeavour? And after that is achieved, what then? After social betterment, what?

In the meantime, look out upon the world and see in which sphere the work which you think requires most to be done, is being performed.

Consult some earnest men among your associates, whose fathers are in the struggle for the uplift of the world in its various sections. You can often get at the real situation as you get information which comes fresh from the home life. There men are off their guard, there they talk straight out of their hearts to a degree to which they do not always declare themselves elsewhere. Those young

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## Conviction as to Duty

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fellows with whom you are associated, with their keen scent for reality, can give you the impressions which they have received from behind the scenes at home.

Of course, you must make allowances for their impressions being in some degree inaccurate, or prejudiced. But at the same time let the information they give you have some place in the general problem. It is not a prime factor in the solution, but give it a place.

While you are steadily gathering the facts for your decision, do not let anything or anybody hurry you into anything rash. But as conviction grows upon you, give it the right of way. Trust that conviction; do not let anything chill it. Do not wait for any man, or any number of men, to join you in your conviction. As you have asserted, you have resolved to claim your right of freedom of choice. Maintain that freedom. Trust the growing intuitions of your own soul. It would be cowardice to wait for a crowd to join you in arriving at a conclusion. Men lose convictions by trifling with them in that way. It is possible by so doing to destroy every clue to a solution which you have been gathering. Keep guard over that precious passion which is growing up within you. Let no man, let no social atmosphere, steal that crown of your manhood. For the growth of that secret conviction of your soul, as to what you should do with

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## The Father's Reply

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your life, is of far more value to you than the crown jewels of an empire.

The man who steals that conviction which you have been nourishing in the holy place of your life takes from you a priceless treasure.

Bathe your growing conviction in the atmosphere of prayer. Have stated periods when that one theme, your life-work, is the entire subject of your petition. Feed your conviction in the secret place of your willing soul.

You may feel lonely, the loneliness may deepen as the pathway of your life opens up before your mind. But there is a sublime grandeur about such solitude. It is the solitude of those who get their marching orders from the spirit of God, and not from the talk of a social set. It is the solitude of progress. It is the experience in which moral originality is born. And it is not until men are willing to listen and obey, in the solitary hour of Divine revelation, that there can come any real moral progress into the life of the world.

A Christian has not only an obligation to obey that summons which may be approved by his inclinations, or his social surroundings; he must go where he believes he is being led. The great Leader in the Christian campaign has a world-wide programme, a programme which knows no geographical limitations, no narrow provincial boundaries. And He relies upon every man's obedience.

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## Conviction as to Duty

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His vast universal purpose can be made an actual cosmic fact only as His will masters men, and conquers their every reluctance, and objection, as their obedience rises patiently, kindly, majestically above every obstacle.

Such men, who have not been disobedient to the heavenly vision, who have not conferred with flesh and blood, when their souls were sure of the summons, are the pioneers in the path of the new humanity.

All the rest are camp followers.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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## The Son's Letter

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### XXIV

#### THE POWER OF GOD IN WORK

MY DEAR FATHER :

There is a natural tendency in us all, I suppose, to shrink from taking a step which has not the sympathy of those whose opinion and good-will are of consequence to us. But as you have said, solitude of spirit is part of the price which one must pay in order to have a share in carrying forward the spirit of progress. Some men, even in college, have had to put that principle into practice in bringing what is considered to be "good form" in college life up to higher levels.

There are few things more difficult to endure than the sense of loneliness which a strong conviction as to an unusual line of duty creates, in one who instinctively dislikes to appear in any way peculiar.

But I can readily understand how such solitude of spirit forms part of the discipline in self-reliance, and is the supreme condition of genuine self-expression.

If one should retreat from the loneliness of soul resulting from obedience to conviction, to find solace in doing what the multitude approves, while

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## The Power of God in Work

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it would produce a feeling of comfort, it would cut one off from the possibility of being a true servant of the Divine will. It would throw him out of the ranks of those who are trying to translate the progressive purpose and spirit of Christ into human society.

And since I am determined to make my personality a channel of the Divine mind, rather than an echo of my surroundings, I am prepared for whatever the consequences may be. The question to which I am now brought is whether I have a right to think that I am good enough, or strong enough, to look forward, without fatal presumption, to the privilege of having a small share in bringing the mind and purpose of God into the progressive life of the world.

There are hundreds of men all about me who are far better and stronger than I. I am not conscious of possessing anything which would be considered above the average in any direction. Is it not therefore presumption on the part of a merely average, untried young man to hope that he may fill even a very obscure place, in the expanding purposes of God, in the midst of the struggling, groping life of humanity?

While I have resolved to nourish into robust vitality every growing conviction of my soul, on the other hand, I do not wish to land myself in moral bankruptcy, by finding myself in a position

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## The Father's Reply

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into which I cannot bring the mental and moral energy which the circumstances of the case shall require. I would feel it to be more than humiliating to discover that what I thought to be moral earnestness turned out to be disillusioned egotism.

Your affectionate son,  
ARTHUR.

MY DEAR ARTHUR:

There need be no fear that your earnest purpose will turn out to be disillusioned egotism, so long as you maintain an unbroken trust in the conquering power of the Spirit of God within you. The same Spirit who is urging you forward is pledged to sustain your efforts. And you must confidently rely upon this sublime fact and fight against every sign which would seem to deny it. Your conflict will be a fight of faith. Your faith will be called upon to defy appearances, and to rest in the calm assurance that your life is victoriously fulfilling its destiny.

The only thing which I would impress upon you is that you must keep your personality in that attitude which makes it possible for the Spirit of God to work through you.

Your entire complex life is a unit, and you must live in that unity. I mean you must always act from the base of your nature. It is possible to live

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in mere sections of one's life. One may talk and think, and act without these expressions coming from the core of his being. Just as a part of an intricate machine may make revolutions, while another part is idle, because the two parts had been disconnected. So it is possible to disconnect the sections of your life. And when such is the case the activity of a single section of the life lacks real power, because it is not receiving power from the Spirit of God at the focus point of character in the elemental depths of the true self. The physical, mental, and moral sections of a life must be linked up, and maintained in that condition of unity.

For example, it is possible at one moment for you to talk merely from your brain and voice, while by remembering, by willing, you can cause your speech to proceed from your elemental self, from the deeper depths of your nature.

That act produces a change, a change which may affect even the tone of your voice, and it alters the atmosphere, the influence, which your personality exhales. That is in part the explanation of the difference, of which people are conscious, between a weak and a strong man. In the one case the words which are uttered spring from a section of the man, and in the other they rise from the elemental man. Whenever only a part of personality is expressed in any act, then the influence it creates is



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## The Father's Reply

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necessarily very slight; it is sometimes called a lack of magnetism. But when the whole man is in an act, then the power which springs from human character at its base is present. And that is the psychological root from which powerful influence springs.

How shall the unity of personality be maintained? How shall one keep his nature open to the inflowing of the power of God?

There are several elements in the answer to that question. Let me mention one or two. Prayer is one of the most powerful means by which the whole life is maintained in its unity. After a period of earnest prayer one may mentally see things differently, the whole atmosphere of the person may be changed, even his walking pace may have been altered. What has happened? The various sections of the life have been brought into a unity, so that the power of God has been able to pervade all the parts from the base upwards.

Doing everything from a high motive is another element in the maintenance of the unity of the whole life. Whenever you elevate your motive in an action, you tend towards the consolidation of your nature. And it does not matter what the thing is which is done.

The welfare of others as a dominating purpose tends to preserve the unity of your whole life.

Leisureliness of bearing is one of the things which

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## The Power of God in Work

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is favourable to the maintaining of a united personality, just as hurry is unfavourable. Hurry means that a section of the life has run away from the rest of it. The belt has slipped off the driving wheel, as it were.

The Spirit will infuse His own life and power into your whole being as you coöperate with Him in keeping yourself in that attitude in which He can make use of you.

And as you are captured by a definite aim towards which your energies are bending, and which reigns like a king in your mind, you are in the possession of a power which is far mightier than mere talent without such power.

No man would claim to be fully equipped for the great position of the presidency of the United States, but the occupant of that office may fall back upon the sublime fact that Divine power uses willing human personalities for the accomplishment of great ends. And every influence upon his life may conspire to expand and deepen his personality into greatness, if he maintains the right attitude towards those influences.

Personal greatness is not necessarily the starting point in the situation ; it is rather an intelligent surrender to and coöperation with the Divine power which is the starting point.

You are something more than a wire which conducts electricity from the point of supply to the

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## The Father's Reply

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point of need, for a wire merely conducts, while personality assimilates what it receives before it carries light and heat and power to the point of need. But the electric wire illustrates the fact that there are certain influences which tend to destroy, or reduce, or increase, the power of conduction. And so it is the business of every man who seeks to be an efficient conductor of the enlightening, empowering, and inspiring presence of God to the darkness, weakness, and bleak coldness of the world, to see to it that nothing in him paralyzes the current of holy energy. And that current of Divine power is never turned off; it waits upon the surrender, the obedience, the unbroken courage of every willing soul.

YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER.

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