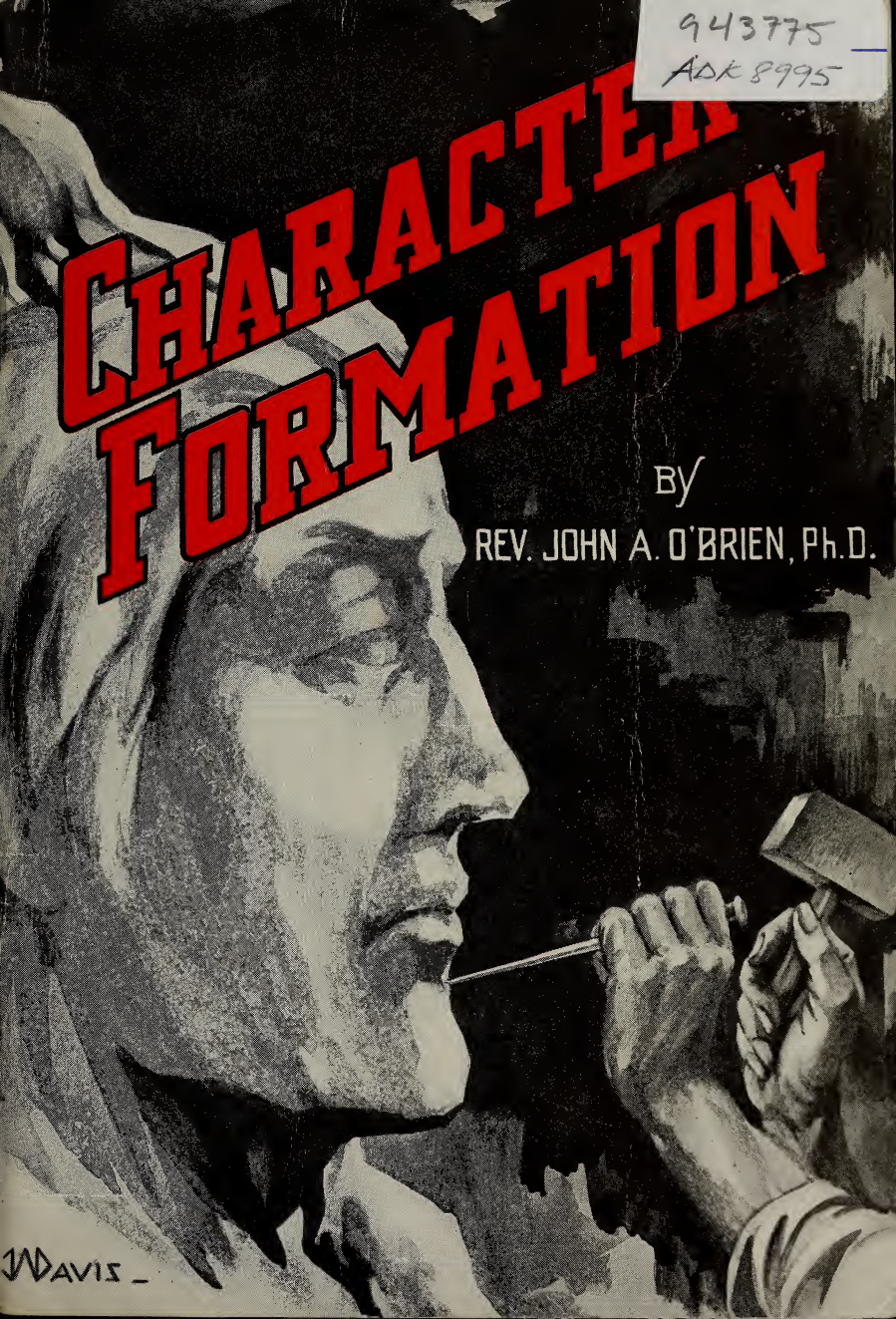


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CHARACTER FORMATION

By

REV. JOHN A. O'BRIEN, Ph.D.



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A Story of Habits and Ideals

DISCUSSION CLUB TEXT WITH OUTLINE

BY

REV. JOHN A. O'BRIEN, PH.D.

The University of Notre Dame

is but one rule of conduct. Always do the right thing.
st may be high in money, in friends, in sacrifice. The
do wrong, however, is infinitely higher. For a temporal
gain we barter the infinities.

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CHARACTER FORMATION

THE progress of science in the last century has revolutionized the world in which we live. The speed with which news is flashed around the globe, the rapidity with which stratoliners wing their flight from coast to coast, the clearness with which a speech in London is heard in San Francisco, would cause our grandparents to gasp in astonishment. Harnessing electricity and riding astride the ether waves, science places at the service of the peasant marvels which dwarf the feats of Aladdin's magic lantern. Man's mastery of the laws of nature has brought to us the means with which we could build a new heaven and a new earth.

But are we? With bombs raining death and destruction from the sky, with huge tanks plowing through the ruins of devastated cities, man has prostituted the discoveries of science to the dirty business of mass slaughter. In Europe and in Asia, man has succeeded in bringing hell on earth.

If a demon escaping from the netherworld were to find himself in the midst of the fighting going on in Europe, as these lines are being written, what a spectacle would he see? With Messerschmitts screeching their message of death, with Stukas dive bombing with deafening roar, with tanks shooting their shrapnel like lava from Mt. Vesuvius, and machine guns beating out their ceaseless rat-a-tat-a-tat of death, the poor creature from inferno might well ask: What new hell is this? Give me a ticket back to Hades. It is not so terrible a place as this.

With the means of building a Paradise on earth at his disposal, why is man building an inferno? Because the develop-

ment of character has not kept pace with the progress of science. While science in the past century has moved with the strides of a giant, man has crawled with the slowness of a snail, if he has crawled at all, along the path of moral progress. He has failed in large measure to put into practice the golden rule and Christ's law of love. Yielding to the instincts of the cave man, he has used the powerful instruments of modern science to vent his cupidity, hatred and vengeance. Instead of hurling rocks, he is throwing bombs and mechanical hurricanes at whole civilizations. The machine which was meant to be his servant is becoming his master and may prove his own undoing.

If ever there was sounded an S O S for character, for ethical insight, and moral stamina, a world in chaos and in agony is gasping that call now. Its flames are writing its message on the illuminated parchment of the skies. That message is saying: What the world needs, if it is to be saved, is not more guns, dreadnaughts, or bombing planes—*but more character in its citizens*. If humanity is to be saved from a second deluge, the deluge of world wide war, it will be saved only by a spiritual redemption, only by putting into practice Christ's all embracing law of love.

That is the message which a world in flames is proclaiming to a frightened humanity today. It should be carried in the headlines of all our papers, proclaimed from every pulpit, carved over the doors of every school. It should become the marching cry of mankind standing at the very brink of destruction.

The folly of trying to build a new world if we do not likewise improve the builder finds apt expression in the lines of Edwin H. Markham:

We all are blind until we see
That in the human plan,
Nothing is worth the making
If it does not make the man.

Why build these cities glorious
If man unbuilted goes?
In vain we build the world unless
The builder also grows.

Meaning of Character

What do we mean by character? The word comes from the Greek *χαρακτήρ*, meaning an instrument to engrave or brand. Thence it came to signify the mark or stamp placed upon an object as an indication of some special fact with reference to it, as of ownership or origin. With reference to people, character has come to mean the sum of qualities or features by which one person is distinguished from others. John Stuart Mill defines character as "a perfectly fashioned will." Perhaps as satisfactory a definition as any we can formulate is simply this: A man of character is one who directs his life according to principles. In contrast with the man who acts on motives of expediency, the man of character acts on principle. The former is changeable like the weather vane. The latter is constant and dependable.

We use the term *principle* in the sense of an ethical and moral standard. Thus the Christian martyrs acted on the principle of unswerving loyalty to Christ, even though that loyalty cost them their lives. The opportunist, acting on expediency, would escape death by yielding under such trying circumstances. "A principle," says Father Ernest Hull, S. J., "is some pregnant idea relating to conduct, grasped firmly by the mind, branded in consciousness, brooded over, elevated into standard of action, and applied to circumstances as they arise."¹ Basic in the idea of character is action in conformity to the moral law, regardless of immediate consequences to oneself or to others.

Character is thus seen to be an *inner* quality by means of which a man steadfastly adheres to ethical principles no matter

¹ *The Formation of Character*, p. 15.

what the pressure exerted by friend or foe to draw him from his course. It is not to be identified with reputation. This refers to what people esteem a man to be, while character signifies what he really is. Reputation is injured by slander and libel, while character endures defamation of every form and is injured only by a voluntary transgression. Reputation may last through many undetected transgressions, or it may be destroyed by a single, even unfounded aspersion.

Character is not the same as intellectual power. For a clever and even a brilliant man may have a weak character, while a person of mediocre or meager mental endowment may possess a good and strong character. Oscar Wilde and the Curé of Ars are instances in point. The inner dynamic quality of the soul, which we term character, may be lost and may be recovered. It may be weakened and it may be strengthened. It is not some mystic element wrapped by fate in the mantle of the immutable. Neither is it sculptured in white marble, cold and impervious to human influence. Like the human body, it is subject to sickness and disease. Like all the faculties of man, it is subject to the laws of exercise, of growth and of development which hold sway throughout the world of life.

Different From Personality

Lastly character is not to be confused with personality. The pleasing qualities which make up personality cannot obscure the absence of solid worth—the gold which does not glitter. Alcibiades offers a classic illustration. Brilliant, witty, clever, handsome, he was yet unstable and dissolute. Personality he had in abundance, but character was woefully lacking. His accidental juxtaposition to Socrates at a banquet presents one of the most dramatic contrasts between personality and character in all literature.

Entering the home of Agathon, Alcibiades is welcomed uproariously and seated next to Socrates. Crowning him with an ivy wreath as the peerless master of the art of conversing,

Alcibiades launches into a tribute to Socrates which Mahaffy terms the most remarkable picture of that noble old Greek ever drawn, setting him forth, as it does, "in all his ugliness, his fascination, his deep sympathy, his iron courage, his unassailable chastity."

Portraying the effect of this strong man's words upon him, Alcibiades declares: "For my heart leaps within me . . . and my eyes rain with tears when I hear him. And I observe that many others are affected in the same way. I have heard Pericles and other great orators, but though I thought they spoke well, I never had any similar feeling, my soul was not stirred by them nor was I angry at my own slavish state. But this Marsyas has often brought me to such a pass that I have felt as if I could hardly endure the life which I am leading. . . . For he makes me confess that I ought not to live as I do, neglecting the wants of my soul . . . therefore, I hold my ears and tear myself away from him. And he is the only person who ever made me ashamed, which you might think not to be in my nature, and there is no one else who does the same, for I know that I cannot answer him or say that I ought not to do as he bids, but when I leave his presence the love of popularity gets the better of me."²

Alcibiades' narrative, telling how his heart leaped within him as he listened to Socrates, brings to mind the experience of the two disciples walking with the Master on the way to Emmaus. After He vanished from their sight, following the breaking of bread they said to each other: "Was not our heart burning within us, whilst he spoke in the way and opened to us the scriptures?"³ No more expressive tribute to the inspiring character of Christ could be paid than this disclosure of the effect of His words upon them. The words of the lowly Nazarene Who walked with them over the dusty roadsides of Judea, Who washed the feet of His disciples, Who cleansed the lepers, Who pardoned the woman taken in adultery, Who forgave the

² Plato, *The Symposium*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett.

³ Luke xxiv. 32.

thief upon the cross, Who was buffeted, spat upon, mocked, scourged, betrayed, and crucified, stirred His disciples.

Why? Because of the beauty and nobility of the character which gave to His words a moving eloquence. "Learn of me," He was able to say, "for I am meek and humble of heart." His actions fitted perfectly into the pattern of His teaching, into the diadem of His moral code. There were no jarring gaps, no flagrant contradictions between word and deed which mar the characters of so many leaders. "What you are," said Lowell "speaks to me so loudly that I cannot hear what you say." It was the character and the life of Jesus which made the hearts of His disciples burn as they listened to His words.

II

HABIT SCULPTURES CHARACTER

HAVING set forth what we mean by character, let us now proceed to ask the practical questions: How can I build a strong character? How can I improve my character? How can I eliminate defects which are causing it to sag under the pressure of temptation and the strain of adversity? The answers to these questions are of supreme importance. For they constitute the key to the solution of most of the difficulties afflicting our world today.

The answers are to be found in large part, I think, in the knowledge of the laws of habit formation. For character is the net resultant of heredity, environment, ideals and habit. Heredity we cannot change. Environment frequently we can change only in part. Our habits, however, are within our power to sculpture as we will. Here lies our direct responsibility. In large part our character is shaped by the habits which we form. Long before middle life our character has hardened like plaster in the mold of our oft repeated acts, rarely if ever to

be reset. Hence the sculptors of our character are the habits which we form.

Habit may be described simply as the disposition whereby one performs an action more readily. It involves both neurological and psychological elements. The neurological basis of habit may be said to be the disposition of the organism to build itself up according to inherited tendencies and grooves of action. The point of practical importance to note here is that the organism tends to grow in the direction of its activity and functioning. The French, with their facility for concise expression, state it aptly in the well-known formula, *La fonction fait l'organe*.—The function makes the organ.

In other words, an action deepens the groove in the nervous system with every repetition, so that it may eventually be performed automatically, with a minimum of conscious attention, or even with none at all. Take for example, the pianist who has only to glance at the musical hieroglyphics to find his fingers reaching out and rippling through a cataract of notes. The mere sight of the note on the music sheet touches off the proper response because the path has been so well traversed, the channel in the nervous system from stimulus to response so deeply dug.

Marvels of Automatism

Not less familiar is the sight of the typist whose trained fingers are beating out sentences while her eyes are everywhere but on the keys. This shows how the nervous system has been made her ally and how the action has been lowered from the plane of a conscious striving to a mechanical reflex. So true is this that a cartoonist has depicted the typical typist as coming to the office, hanging up her hat, throwing her brains out the window, seating herself at the typewriter and letting her fingers go on a muscular spree.

Robert Houdin relates how at an early age he reduced to effortless automatism complicated movements involving rapidity of visual and tactile perception and precision of respondent

movements which constitute the foundation for success in every kind of prestidigitation. After a month's practice in juggling balls in the air, he was able to keep *four* balls going at once with such ease that he was accustomed to place matter before him to read without hesitation. After the lapse of thirty years during which he had scarcely touched the balls, he was agreeably surprised to find that he could still manage to read with ease while keeping *three* balls going.¹

The instance shows how the neurological grooves of habit formed in youth persist through the years and upon the proper stimulus are ever ready to resume their effortless functioning. That is why games, songs, languages, manual skills acquired in youth are never lost, but are subject to easy recall. Let a person who learned to play a piano in childhood and who has not touched an instrument for thirty years sit down at one, and he will find the fingers automatically reaching out for the keys of a selection in which he was once perfectly drilled.

Even more startling are the feats of precise co-ordination sometimes exhibited by golfers. The writer once witnessed a professional golfer place a ball on the crystal face of a Swiss watch. Then taking his stance, with a mighty wallop he drove the ball some 250 yards straight down the fairway. This, without so much as scratching the face of the watch! Practice had turned this series of involved movements over to the precise and effortless mechanism of automatism.

Ethical Significance

The point of ethical significance for us to note here is that habit with its anatomical substratum enables an act to be done easily, quickly, with a minimum of attention, and with a tendency to be repeated. Furthermore, we form habits not only of action but of thought. The methods we habitually pursue, the criteria we employ in solving a problem, become ingrained habits of thought which have as their neurological

¹ *Autobiography* p. 26.

counterparts deep dug channels which are traversed most easily. The difficulty of escaping from these customary grooves and patterns of thought at times gives rise to prejudice and bias, and among the old usually begets a reluctance to accept new ideas or embrace new ways. While we have pointed out briefly the neurological basis of habit, we want to balance our treatment by observing with St. Thomas Aquinas that habit likewise affects a modification of the will, and thus reaches deeply into man's spiritual nature and exercises enormous repercussions therein.

Let us now proceed to set forth some of the ethical implications of habit. For before we realize it, most of us have become mere walking bundles of habits. Habits which we will carry with us to our dying day. So the destiny which each one carves out for himself, both in this world and in the world to come, may be said in truth to be the result of the habits which he forms. The sequence is a gradual and subtle one, worth noting. I would state it thus:

Sow a thought and reap an act.

Sow an act and reap a habit.

Sow a habit and reap a character.

Sow a character and reap a destiny.

"Habit a second nature! Habit is ten times nature," the Duke of Wellington exclaimed. Charged with the duty of transforming awkward recruits into trained and disciplined soldiers, this veteran had ample opportunity to see how daily drilling completely refashioned his subjects.

Huxley² relates the story of a practical joker who, seeing a discharged veteran carrying his dinner under his arm, suddenly called out: "Attention!" Immediately the old soldier brought his hands down rigidly to his sides, while his mutton and potatoes fell into the gutter. Years of daily drilling had

² *Elementary Lessons in Physiology*, lesson XII.

so dug the path from stimulus to response into his nervous system that the action was automatic and almost irresistible.

Fly-Wheel of Society

Few men have written with greater penetration upon habit than William James. His chapter on this subject is a classic which will repay frequent reading. Thus vividly does James portray the enormous influence of habit upon society: "Habit is thus the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent. It alone is what keeps us all within the bounds of ordinance, and saves the children of fortune from the envious uprisings of the poor. It alone prevents the hardest and most repulsive walks of life from being deserted by those brought up to tread therein. It keeps the fisherman and the deck-hand at sea through the winter; it holds the miner in his darkness, and nails the countryman to his log-cabin and his lonely farm through all the months of snow; it protects us from invasion by the natives of the desert and of the frozen zone.

"It dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice, and to make the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there is no other for which we are fitted, and it is too late to begin again. It keeps different social strata from mixing. Already at the age of twenty-five you see the professional mannerism settling down on the young commercial traveler, on the young doctor, on the young minister, on the young counsellor-at-law. You see the little lines of cleavage running through the character, the tricks of thought, the prejudices, the ways of the 'shop,' in a word, from which the man can by-and-by no more escape than his coat-sleeve can suddenly fall into a new set of folds. On the whole, it is best he should not escape. It is well for the world that in most of us, by the age of thirty, the character has set like plaster, and will never soften again.³

³ *Psychology*, vol. I, p. 121.

The first six years of a child's life constitute the period of supreme importance for laying the foundation of character. It is during these impressionable years that habits are formed with the greatest ease. Parents will do well to train the child during these years to form correct habits of reacting emotionally, volitionally, mentally so that major surgical operations will not be required in later years to remove the phobias, complexes and tics which so often creep into the "spoiled" child and throw the adult sadly out of gear. "Train up a child," counselled the *Book of Proverbs*, thousands of years ago," and when he is old he will not depart from it.⁴

Early Discipline

"In the disciplining of children," observes Dr. Alexis Carrel, "the first responsibility falls on the parent. This responsibility has not been discharged. The spoiled child is America's heaviest crop. Nowhere else in the world are the young so systematically pampered and fatally handicapped by parents who have failed to teach them to work, earn and learn. The outstanding characteristic of young people today is a lack of gratitude for the advantages bestowed upon them.

"In making the better race there must be a general overhauling of child education. Any program that pampers a child's rapacious ego does a disservice to the individual and society. 'Self-expressionistic' theories of pedagogy are doomed because they scatter a child's energies during the period of habit formation. 'When should I begin to train my child?' a young mother asked Sir William Osler. 'How old is your child?' asked Osler. 'Two years.' 'You are already too late,' replied Osler. From the earliest days of its existence, discipline must be impressed upon a child. On the first day of spoon-feeding, he should be taught to eat everything on his plate without fuss or coaxing. Here the first disciplinary conquest is made."

At an early age the child should be trained to keep his

⁴ *Book of Proverbs*, xxii. 16.

belongings in order. By the time he has reached four, he should be able to dress himself and to perform all the essentials of his own toilet. If he fails to approximate these achievements, the parents are retarding his capacity for sustained effort and are thus failing properly to prepare him for his work in school and his place in society.

"Chop More Wood"

"As children grow older," continues Carrel, "they must be taught to accept heavier responsibilities. Do not hire a glazier to set the pane of glass broken by your 10-year-old son. Require him to buy the glass and set it himself. Teach him to make his own kite instead of buying one for him. Your 12-year-old daughter will feel a glow of achievement after being entrusted with the preparation of an entire meal. No home is so wealthy that it can afford to exempt the girls from helping with the housework and cooking. If Thoreau did not disdain to mow his neighbors' lawns for 15 cents an hour, there is no reason why a high school boy should be affronted by such labor.

"The habit of passing out nickels and dimes for candy, soft drinks and ice cream is a harmful one. A wise father I know said to his four children, 'You can have all the ice cream you want if you make it yourselves.' Later he bought a bottle capper and taught his children how to make root beer. Thrift and self-reliance developed in children will serve them admirably in later life.

"Unless we emulate certain worthwhile features of fascist education—notably their discipline and utilization of every waking hour—we shall be no match for the tougher products that result from such an education. Democracy may have to be defended on the battlefield. Can it be adequately defended by those who spent their adolescence listening to radio romances, or expressing their pitiful little personalities in water colors and tantrums?"⁵

⁵ *The Reader's Digest*, September, 1940.

Will Rogers epitomized this timely warning of the great medical scientist when he once remarked: "What the younger generation needs is to chop more kindling wood and to cultivate a few inhibitions."

The period below twenty is vital in the formation of moral habits. The youth who has made habitual correct methods of reacting to temptations against the moral law will cross the threshold of manhood with bulwarks of fortification capable of resisting the stronger assault which maturity will inevitably bring. The winds and the tempests will beat with fury upon the citadel of character. But they will beat in vain because the citadel is founded on the rock of well formed youthful habits. As rods of steel which run through re-enforced concrete give it a sturdiness which the pounding waves of the tumultuous seas cannot budge, so the crystallized habits of a virtuous youth give to the adult an adamantine sturdiness which will stand him in good stead when the clamorous passions of maturity are pounding upon the weak walls of flesh and demanding their ounce of blood.

III

NERVOUS SYSTEM—ALLY

IF the findings of modern psychology yield any generalization of ethical import, more significant than all the others, it is that we should *make our nervous system our ally instead of our enemy*. This may be said to be the chief practical value to be derived from the study of psychology. By learning how to groove worthwhile habits in the neural paths, we capitalize upon their tendency to effortless performance and to repetition. We are like the prudent man who puts his hard earned savings to work for him and enables him thereafter to live upon the interests of the fund. For this purpose we should render habitual and automatic as soon as possible as many good and

useful actions as we can, while we guard against the formation of detrimental habits as we would guard against smallpox or the bite of a rattlesnake.

To turn over to the effortless custody of automatism as many of the details of daily conduct as possible is to set the higher powers of the mind free for grappling with problems which challenge all the resources of our insight and intelligence. What spectacle is more pathetic than that of the individual for whom nothing is habitual but indecision, who runs the whole gamut of pros and cons every time he is confronted with the momentous problem of deciding about some insignificant detail of daily conduct. To do this little task or that, to play golf, to go to a movie, to visit a friend, to write a letter, all these are made objects of such express volitional deliberation that the individual is half exhausted by the time he has really made up his mind.

As likely as not after the deed he will be haunted by regret or worry as to whether or not he should have done it. Such an abulic individual resembles for all the world nothing so much as a chicken with its head cut off, flopping hither and thither, and getting nowhere fast. Happy the individual who has so ingrained these daily duties and decisions as to do them with effortless automatism and thus to spare himself the wear and tear and the ceaseless pother of deliberate wrestling with these unending minutiae. Happy the man for whom most of the day's duties have been rendered automatic, that he may have some peace of mind and some leisure for thoughts worth while.

Vigorous Initiative

Let us now consider the more important rules, based upon the findings of modern psychology, for the formation of habit.

Launch yourself upon the new practice with as vigorous and determined an initiative as possible. As every beginning is difficult it is of crucial importance that the initial effort be made with such abundant strength as to carry it through to success. For this reason it is wise to stack the cards of cir-

cumstance in favor of a successful issue. Think only of the motives which will prompt the right decision. Avoid even the whiff of a thought in the wrong direction. Make engagements which will preclude your discontinuance of the new course and your falling back into the old ways.

Military strategists attribute much of the success achieved by Germany in the World War and in the European conflict breaking out in 1939 to the vigorous initiative and the large scale on which she launched her offensives. While her foreign office spokesman would be notifying the ambassador of another nation that Hitler had decided to break off diplomatic relations, his mighty military juggernaut would have launched its attack hours before and would by that time be many miles across the enemy's border. Though ethically unjustifiable, it was militarily effective.

For many years St. Augustine, chained to his lustful habits, had uttered the all too human aspiration: "O God, grant me chastity, *but not yet.*" Through no such half-hearted velleities could Augustine break the manacles which bound him. Finally the thought of "the youths and maidens of every age and race" who had elected continence, spurred Augustine to ask: "What these have done, may not I also do?" This deepening reflection along with the determination aroused in him by the voice he heard in the garden, saying, "Take and read," unleashed a fury of assault which enabled the penitent to storm the citadel of continence with such success that he became a model for young and old—the shining light of the See of Hippo which was destined to illumine the world with its moral splendor.

Continue Initiative

Continue this initiative and don't allow failures to discourage you because effort despite an occasional defeat, is accumulative and will eventually triumph. Perseverance is but another name for a continuance of the initial drive. Every athlete, every student, every business and professional man who

has tasted even a measure of success knows how essential is that tenacity of purpose which holds one steadfast over the laps which stretch out between the starter's gun and the final goal. How many a football team has staged brilliant drives down the field only to wilt when in striking distance of the enemy's goal and thus to be robbed of victory. To prepare his players for these crucial periods, Rockne was accustomed to imbue them with the spirit of his famous slogan: "We only begin to fight when the going gets tough." In practice, it meant that while they were to fight all the time, the new reservoirs of energy and determination they must tap, the Herculean efforts they must put forth when the enemy resistance stiffens with its back to the wall, must make their previous efforts appear by contrast to be mere loafing.

The holder of the world's record for the two mile is Greg Rice of Notre Dame. Despite his short stature, five feet, three inches, which puts him at such a disadvantage with tall runners with their longer strides, he has outdistanced every competitor over the two mile course during the past year. When the writer asked this modest young runner what factor he regarded as the most important, he answered: "The ability to uncork a burst of speed at the end." It has been this surprising faculty of unleashing a new explosion of speed which has brought dismay to his competitors and catapulted him ahead of them across the tape. Not less important than the vigorous start are the steady grind and the final spurt.

The classic example of perseverance is, of course, Christopher Columbus. No one can read the story of his pioneering voyage across the trackless waters of the Atlantic, without realizing that not less important than the daring and original conception of the great discoverer was his iron willed determination to push his undertaking through to a successful issue or to die in the attempt. Neither the shoreless seas nor the fears of his sailors which swelled into the threat of mutiny were able to quail his indomitable spirit or stay him in his determined quest. As I knelt, one summer day, before the

altar of the church in the Azores before which Columbus prayed for courage to see his venture through, as he bade "Good-bye" to the last outpost of land, I think I learned the source from which flowed the strength and the dogged determination to carry on to the end. The lesson, which Columbus gave the world, of carrying the vigor of the start into the ripened glory of a successful end, finds beautiful expression in the lines of Joaquin Miller:

Behind him lay the gray Azores
 Behind the gates of Hercules;
Before him not the ghost of shores,
 Before him only shoreless seas.

The good mate said: "Now must we pray,
 For lo! the very stars are gone.
Brave Admiral, speak; what shall I say?
 "Why, say 'sail on! sail on! and on!'"

No Exception

Never allow any exception in regard to your resolution. Each fall, as James points out, is like letting slip from your fingers a ball of twine which you are rolling up. A single slip undoes far more than a dozen turns. The secret of success in conditioning the nervous system to pull in the direction of the habit we are forming is not to double cross it with a single relapse.

"The peculiarity of the moral habits, contradistinguishing them from the intellectual acquisitions," as Professor Bain observes, "is the presence of two hostile powers, one to be gradually raised into the ascendant over the other. It is necessary, above all things in such a situation, never to lose a battle. Every gain on the wrong side undoes the effect of many conquests on the right. The essential precaution, therefore, is so to regulate the two opposing powers that the one may have a series of uninterrupted successes, until repetition has fortified

it to such a degree as to enable it to cope with the opposition, under any circumstances. This is the theoretically best career of mental progress."

Who is there who cannot recall inebriates who never were able to wean themselves from the habit because they were always permitting exceptions to their resolve of abstinence. The single drink would be the spark which would set their cravings aflame and reduce the temple of their noble resolve to dust and ashes. A worker in a powder factory cannot risk a single smoke without exposing the plant and the lives of all the workers to the imminent peril of destruction. Like powder magazines ready to explode at the slightest provocation are the passions and the appetites which we are seeking to tame in setting up a habit which runs counter to the gratifications previously allowed.

The importance of guarding against an exception will be in proportion to the violence and the imperiousness of the passion one is seeking to conquer. If it has long held a dominance over one, then it becomes doubly important for him to spurn a compromise and to declare war to the finish. Deeply grained in the nervous system, the passion can be dislodged from its tyrannical throne only by complete and unconditional rebellion. Here every slip deepens its control, dissipates the effort to resist, and engenders a sense of hopelessness in prolonging the futile struggle.

Sensuality

This is particularly true in regard to sensuality. For this reason confessors of souls will frequently suggest to a penitent, manacled for years to a vicious habit, to come to daily Holy Communion. While this brings in a new factor, that of divine assistance in their struggle, it also commits the individual to avoid all circumstances of time, person, or place which might conspire against his resolve to admit of no exception. Recognizing the weakness of human nature, however, the prudent confessor will instruct his client to rush to the

tribunal of confession should any single lapse occur. By so doing, the individual will be rescued from the immediate danger of further relapses so likely to occur when he feels the consciousness of guilt, the sense of exile from the friendship of God, and is inclined erroneously to say that a few more tumbles in the mire could not make him much worse than he is.

Few sights at Notre Dame have impressed the writer more than the spectacle of eighteen confessors setting out each morning in the school year to the various chapels and halls on the campus. Here they are available to the students to have their consciences cleared of any element which, if not removed, might deter them from daily Holy Communion and thus prepare the way for deeper infection. Back of the amazing success which the Fathers of the Holy Cross have experienced in leading 1,600 students to Holy Communion each day and half of the remaining 1,600 each week, is the generosity with which they make themselves available to the students for confession and for administering Holy Communion. They not only preach the doctrine of frequent Holy Communion, but they implement it with action.

They know how weak is the human will, unaided by grace from on High. "Quarry the granite rock" says Cardinal Newman, "with razors, moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then you may hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passions and the pride of men." Culture alone will not save. Religion is needed. The conscience which does not sink its roots into the subsoil of religious faith, nor project its antennae beyond the roof of the skies, misses alike the music of divine inspiration and the thunder of divine commands.

"Tapering Off"

The question of "tapering-off" in breaking such habits as drinking and smoking might here be raised. In general, the weight of expert testimony is in favor of the immediate acquisition of the new habit, *if there be a real possibility of carrying*

it out. Caution must be exercised that the will is not assigned so stiff a job as to ensure its defeat at the very outset. Such is likely to breed discouragement and despair. But if, in the language of sports, one can "take" it, then it is better to undergo a brief period of suffering which is the almost inevitable result of the abrupt severance of an habitual indulgence.

By this procedure the old habit is more certainly eradicated and the new one formed. It will surprise many a chronic devotee of Bacchus and of Lady Nicotine to discover how speedily the craving dies of inanition if it be *never* fed. Who has not known individuals who gave up smoking during Lent with enormous difficulty, only to discover that when Easter arrived the craving had subsided into somnolence or had completely disappeared.

As Professor Bahnsen observes: "One must first learn, unmoved, looking neither to the right nor left, to walk firmly on the straight and narrow path, before one can begin 'to make one's self over again.' He who every day makes a fresh resolve is like one who, arriving at the edge of the ditch he is to leap, forever stops and returns for a fresh run. Without *unbroken* advance there is no such thing as *accumulation* of the ethical forces possible, and to make this possible, and to exercise us and habituate us in it, is the sovereign blessing of regular *work*."

IV

GRASP FIRST OPPORTUNITY

GRASP the first opportunity to translate your resolve into action and utilize every emotional prompting along the line of the habit you wish to form. The psychological basis of this rule is the fact that the neural paths of habit are grooved not by making resolves or aspirations but by making those resolves produce *motor effects*, by reducing the aspiration to action.

No amount of mere resolving will suffice to form a habit—save the habit of hollow resolves. Hell is paved with good intentions. The proverb emphasizes the widely recognized futility of intending, but of always stopping short of execution.

It illustrates the point in this rule that emotions must yield a precipitate of deed. Otherwise they evaporate into thin air, leaving the individual more exhausted, but no farther along the shining pathway of noble endeavor, than before the emotional spree began. In sober fact, every time a glow of noble sentiment is allowed to peter out without a single motor response, the individual loses ground in his struggle and becomes bogged down under the enlarging incubus of chronic frustration.

I remember a young priest observing at a dinner on New Year's Day: "I have made a resolution to anticipate the recitation of my Breviary every day throughout the year."

This refers to the practice of saying Matins and Lauds on the previous day and thus being praiseworthy a step or, at least, a half a step ahead, of the line of strict requirement.

The elderly pastor smiled.

"Father," he replied, "I have been making that same resolution every New Year's Day for forty years, but I haven't caught up with it yet."

The cards were stacked heavily against his ever doing it. Forty years of allowing a resolve to evaporate into a mere velleity had dug too deep a neural path of ingrained habit to expect that it would ever pass from the cocoon of velleity into volition and fulfillment.

Rousseau's Example

A classic instance of noble sentimentalizing with no concrete fruition is the case of Rousseau. With flaming eloquence he appeals to the mothers of France to follow nature and nurse their babies themselves, while he sends his own to the foundling hospital. To all such vendors of lofty sentiments we might justly say: "Sell" yourself and then you can "sell" me. Prac-

tice what you preach and then we shall believe you. "Physician, heal thyself." Not sentiments, resolves, words, but actions count. An ounce of concrete deed is worth a ton of abstract sentimentalizing.

"There is no more contemptible type of human character," observes James, "than that of the nerveless sentimentalist and dreamer, who spends his life in a weltering sea of sensibility and emotion, but who never does a manly concrete deed. . . . The weeping of a Russian lady over the fictitious personages in the play, while her coachman is freezing to death on his seat outside, is the sort of thing that everywhere happens on a less glaring scale. Even the habit of excessive indulgence in music, for those who are neither performers themselves nor musically gifted enough to take it in a purely intellectual way, has probably a relaxing effect upon the character. One becomes filled with emotions which habitually pass without prompting to any deed, and so the inertly sentimental condition is kept up. The remedy would be never to suffer one's self to have an emotion at a concert without expressing it afterward in some active way. Let the expression be the least thing in the world—speaking genially to one's aunt, or giving up one's seat in a horse-car, if nothing more heroic offers—but let it not fail to take place."¹

Charles Kingsley emphasizes the importance of doing as contrasted with mere dreaming in the well-known lines:

Do noble deeds, not dream
Them all day long.
And so make life, death, and that vast forever
One grand sweet song.

Whole-hearted Effort

Careful, whole-hearted effort must be put into the work of forming a habit. Slovenly, slipshod, indifferent work, whether it be in reading, in memorizing, in learning to play golf or a

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

piano, is next to useless. Some twenty-five years ago the writer conducted an investigation of the reading habits of thousands of grade school pupils in Illinois. One of the significant conclusions emerging from that study was that concentration of attention is of crucial importance in the formation of habits of rapid, fluent reading.² If that be lacking, the reading degenerates into dawdling and woolgathering and is virtually a waste of time.

Concentration of attention was found to be in reading, as it will be found to be in all types of mental activity, the index of efficiency. "Attention and effort," points out James, "are but two names for the same psychic fact."³ Concentration is the bore which, under the pressure of the augur of the will, penetrates to the core of the problem and achieves the mastery. If a habit is worth forming at all, it is worth whole-hearted effort. Otherwise, it should not be undertaken. To prevent dawdling and to enlist concentration upon a task, it is often helpful to place a time limit for its completion. This acts as a wholesome counteractive of the tendency toward distractions and frequently taps layers of energy which have never been mobilized because they have never been needed.

John Erskine tells of his using five and ten minute periods to complete some writing for which he was finding it difficult to secure longer periods because of his many duties. Under the lash of the time limit he found himself getting instantly to what he wanted to say instead of going through the customary warming-up periods. It was an eye-opener as to how much could be accomplished in periods of such brevity that they were formerly scorned—and wasted.

It is probable that most mortals are working well within the margin of their potential abilities. To borrow a figure of speech from mechanics, they are hitting on only four cylinders instead of the six or eight they really have. Since worthwhile habits are among the most important treasures which can

² *Silent Reading*, by John A. O'Brien, The Macmillan Co. New York, N. Y.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 126.

be acquired, it follows that they are deserving of whole-hearted effort and of a zeal that never lags. As Bishop John Lancaster Spalding has well said:

Most precious gems lie deep in earth or sea,
And with much toil are sought.
Great knowledge with great labor must be bought,
And they must plow and sow who hope to reap.

Tell Your Friends

Tell your friends about your resolution. This summons reinforcements in the form of shame, social respect and honor which are pulled into play by the consciousness that others are watching your results. Powerful indeed is the pressure exerted upon us all by public opinion. While intangible, it is generally more influential than concrete rewards or punishments. Thus Lewis Lawes, the warden at Sing Sing for many years, expressed the conviction that the penalty which hurts most prisoners more than fines and imprisonment is the loss of the esteem of their acquaintances and friends. That is one reason why crimes are much less likely to be committed by an individual in a community where he is known than where he is a complete stranger. The mantle of anonymity is considered a sufficient cloak for many a crime. Jane Addams tells of the immigrant who came to Hull House in Chicago to join one of the social groups organized for study and recreation.

"May I ask what brought you, a stranger, here?" inquired Miss Addams.

"I could not fight all Hell alone," was his laconic reply.

Back of the idea of the vow taken in public, is this same idea. A young couple pledge their love and fidelity to each other in the marriage ceremony witnessed by many of their friends, and recorded in the newspapers for others. The bride henceforth wears her wedding ring, proclaiming her status to the world. The title, *Miss*, is now changed to *Mrs.* and further emphasizes her married state. What are all these but social

re-enforcements for the vow of conjugal fidelity which she and her spouse pronounced at the wedding ceremony. Who will deny that they are valuable supports for the good intention which alas! often finds residence in a will none too strong?

Even greater use is made of these social re-enforcements in the case of religious—priests, brothers, nuns. Not only do they receive a title distinctive of their state, but they wear a garb which proclaims their lot in life. While it is true that the garb does not make the monk, it may well serve as a shield against needless danger. The tonsure which certain religious orders wear in Europe is a further means of proclaiming to the world that they have chosen the service of God and the altar as the portion of their inheritance forever.

If an individual has determined to abstain from intoxicating liquor, let him tell his friends of his resolve. He will find that the desire for their respect for his plighted word will shame him from entering a tavern or taking other steps which would be tantamount to a public confession of his failure. One of the hardest phrases in any language to pronounce is: "I have failed." When to the inherent reluctance of pronouncing it at all is added the necessity of pronouncing it in public, the individual will find himself struggling desperately to escape so disagreeable a task. The public proclamation of the resolve serves, therefore, as an anchor to the windward and a support for its maintenance in the teeth of difficulty.

V

START WITH LITTLE THINGS

START with little things rather than with big ones. Since the influence of the initial success or failure is enormous, it is important to engender the necessary confidence by tackling something which is within one's reach of achievement. Thus the toper who wishes to acquire the habit of sobriety might well

start with an abstinence pledge for a week or a month. If he starts with a pledge for life, the prospect might seem too formidable for endurance and nip his resolve in the bud. Likewise a young man resolving to become a musician by practicing in his spare time, might well start with an hour a day, rather than plunge into a lengthy practice only to find it too onerous and irksome to maintain.

At the beginning of Lent, at the close of a mission or a retreat, when good resolves are in order, experienced counselors of souls invariably warn against undertaking too much. Start with one resolve, they counsel, which you are certain to keep. Then after you have achieved that, you can take on more of a load up the mountain of perfection. He who would root out one vice each year, observes the author of *The Imitation of Christ*, would soon become a perfect man. "Rome was not built in a day" is an adage that they would do well to bear in mind, who are too eager to see the shining temple of their dreams achieved over night. It is well to remember that we do not have wings to fly but only feet to climb and climb. By steady plodding, however, we can scale the tallest heights.

Make Practice Pleasant

Make the practice of the habit as pleasant as possible and the failure to practice it as unpleasant as you can. Underlying this rule is the psychological fact that we tend to repeat an action fraught with pleasure and to shrink from one fraught with pain. "The burnt finger shuns the flame" is illustrative of much in the psychology of habit formation. If the action which we wish to render habitual is of a neutral character, or even somewhat unpalatable, it will be well to see what can be done to sugarcoat it.

Professor Edward L. Thorndyke narrates that he found it quite unpalatable to undertake lecture engagements which involved traveling. Studying what he could do to lessen the discomfort, he found that by taking a Pullman and having the porter provide him with a table, he could continue his work

with virtually no loss of time, and even with a measure of advantage resulting from no interruption on the longer trips. By arranging a few other details which ministered to his comfort, he speedily found that his aversion to this type of work disappeared.

Few of the findings of genetic psychology are more important for the teacher to remember than that which emphasizes the wisdom of commending the pupil who has begun a new and difficult act and has achieved some measure of success. A hearty word of praise will often tide him over the difficult period of the beginning, when discouragement easily arises, and prompt him to carry on till automatism renders the practice easy and pleasant.

Persons who are quitting the practice of smoking will often have a stick of gum present, so when the urge becomes pressing, they can find relief in chewing gum. Likewise individuals discontinuing the use of liquor are encouraged to have candy, and especially chocolate, at hand, so they can relieve the pressure and assuage the craving. There is an inborn craving for that which is pleasant and a natural shrinking from that which is painful. Human nature at best is weak and frail. They who wish it to bear its burden successfully must be careful not to overload.

This rule has elements of kinship with the preceding and merges to a considerable extent with it, inasmuch as both emphasize the importance of starting out with something for which there is a well grounded hope of success.

Keep Faculty of Effort Alive

Keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little gratuitous exercise every day. This last rule, formulated by James, may be said to be the most basic of all. It is interesting to see a distinguished psychologist reach by purely scientific procedure the same conclusion which moralists have long emphasized on ascetical grounds. This rule counsels one to do more than is required, to walk the second mile in gratuitous service, to

undertake little deeds of mortification each day in order that the will may be kept strong and vigorous.

“Be systematically ascetic or heroic in little unnecessary points,” says James, “do every day or two something for no other reason than that you would rather not do it, so that when the hour of dire need draws nigh, it may find you not unnerved and untrained to stand the test. Asceticism of this sort is like the insurance which a man pays on his house and goods. The tax does him no good at the time, and possibly may never bring him a return. But if the fire *does* come, his having paid it will be his salvation from ruin. So with the man who has daily inured himself to habits of concentrated attention, energetic volition, and self-denial in unnecessary things. He will stand like a tower when everything rocks around him, and when his softer fellow-mortals are winnowed like chaff in the blast.”¹

Please note that this is not a moralist speaking, but a psychologist speaking in the name of his science. Sounding a similar note Dr. Alexis Carrel, the top ranking medical scientist of our day, has recently warned that the youth of America is getting soft and flabby from the lack of discipline, hardships, and self-denial. Having enjoyed the happy privilege of conferring upon Dr. Carrel the Cardinal Newman Award for his contributions to medical science, I was impressed with his discerning observations on the crying need for discipline and sacrifice for the people of our land. These observations he has recently published. They have attracted nationwide attention.

“Everything,” he writes, “has been too easy for most of us. All life has aspired to the condition of an English week-end—a Thursday-to-Monday holiday of minimum effort and maximum pleasure. Amusement has been our national cry; ‘a good time’ our chief concern. The perfect life, as viewed by the average youth or adult is a round of ease or entertainment, of motion pictures, radio programs, parties, alcoholic and sexual excesses. This indolent and undisciplined way of life has sapped our individual vigor, imperiled our democratic form of govern-

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 126 f.

ment. Our race pitifully needs new supplies of discipline, morality and intelligence. Strange to say, democracies have made no consistent effort to inculcate these qualities in their citizens. Although vast social betterment schemes have been projected, we have forgotten that these ultimately depend for their vitality upon the individual citizen. 'You cannot carve rotten wood,' says the Chinese proverb. Nor can you carve decayed character into the durable underpinnings of a better race.

"We have scientifically perfected flowers, fruits and animals, yet have neglected to apply simple, scientific principles to the full flowering of ourselves. Vast potentialities in our tissues and brain lie dormant, merely awaiting development through disciplined use. To combat dangers from within and without, the race must enormously strengthen itself. This cannot be achieved by huge governmental expenditures, or by committees and organizations. If there is to be any regeneration of our people, it must take place in the small laboratories of our private lives. We must realize, with all the intensity we can command, that refashioning our own character is not only the most satisfying and rewarding preoccupation of man, but is also the most important contribution we can make to society."

This deep student of human nature then points out that this renewal of ourselves is a three-dimensional undertaking. We must reconstruct ourselves on the three planes of conduct, physical, mental, moral; otherwise there will be a lack of balance and the salt will lose its savor. The instrument which man must employ in this harmonious reconstruction of himself is *discipline*.

"Underbrush of Laziness"

By lighting successive small candles of will power, Carrel shows how we ultimately generate a beam that illuminates our entire life. "By constantly applying discipline," he continues, "in the performance of irksome tasks or in conquering our slothful habits, we generate high voltages of power. Daily

drill and years of discipline in matters both large and small can make a man over in most of his conduct. Demanding definite quotas and quality of performance from ourselves; observing ironclad rules of forbearance and consideration in human relations; restraining our appetites for indulgence and indolence, for food, alcohol and tobacco—all these are priceless disciplines, firm molders of character and will. The man who has daily drilled himself in little gratuitous exercises of will, who has been systematically ascetic or heroic in small matters, will find that he is supported by strong inner buttresses when winds of adversity rage around him. He will feel the joyous spark of divinity within himself.

“Discipline alone will confer physical fitness upon most of us. A multiplicity of ease-making inventions tempt us to muscular flabbiness. Appalled by our bodily degeneration, we periodically resolve to play golf, tennis, or at least walk home from the office. After a few days our resolution flags; the underbrush of laziness grows up around us again. Only by repeated spurrings of will can we maintain physical hardihood.

“I know a man who hands over his car keys every week-end to his doctor, a next-door neighbor. During that period, he does all his errands on foot, avoiding highways as much as possible, tramping across fields and over rough terrain. He conditions himself by staying outdoors in all weathers. We all need more sun, wind and weather as tonic for the body. Exposure whips up effort in sweat glands, lungs, circulatory system. This effort is quickly translated into health and energy. Life leaps like a geyser for those who drill through the rock of inertia. Yet all around us we see persons who prefer idleness or petty diversion to the stern challenge that calls for disciplined efforts. The pushover job, the unearned meal, the easy choice, are tempting too many Americans down the soft decline.”²

Here we have an interesting illustration of how science comes along and unravels the factual evidence for the

² *Ibid.*

validity of great spiritual truths which Christianity has long proclaimed. Nineteen centuries before William James formulated this psychological law and Carrel confirmed it, Christ had declared: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."³ St. Paul had likewise long ago pointed out the necessity of mortification for the curbing of the rebellious nature of man: "For the flesh lusts against the spirit," he writes, "and the spirit against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, so that you do not do what you would. . . . And they who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires."⁴ Not less vivid and revealing is the passage in his letter to the Romans: "To wish is within my power, but I do not find the strength to accomplish what is good. For I do not do the good that I wish, but the evil that I do not wish, that I perform."⁵

Explaining this strange contradiction within our own nature, the Apostle points to the disharmony between the law of his members and the law of his mind, in other words, between the flesh and the spirit. "But I see," he writes, "another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and making me prisoner to the law of sin that is my members." Only by deeds of daily self-denial can the unruly flesh be brought into subjection to the sweet yoke of Christ. Second only to the inspired Word of God in inculcating the wisdom of following the royal road of the cross is *The Imitation of Christ*. "He who best knows how to endure," writes the author of this marvelous book "will possess the greater peace. Such a one is conqueror of himself and lord of the world, the friend of Christ and an heir of heaven."⁶

"Molecules Are Counting It"

William James concludes his chapter on habit with the following passage, so brilliant and revealing that it will long

³ Gal. v. 17 ff.

⁴ Matt. vi. 24.

⁵ Rom. vii. 18 ff.

⁶ Book 2, chapter 3.

remain a classic: "The physiological study of mental conditions is thus the most powerful ally of hortatory ethics. The hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way. Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, 'I won't count this time!' Well! he may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibers the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness wiped out."

Tracing out the implications of this, James concludes: "Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work. Let no youth have any anxiety about the upshot of his education, whatever the line of it may be. If he keep faithfully busy each hour of the working day, he may safely leave the final result to itself. He can with perfect certainty count on waking up some fine morning, to find himself one of the competent ones of his generation, in whatever pursuit he may have singled out. Silently between all the details of his business, the *power of judging* in all that class of matter will have built itself up within him as a possession that will never pass away. Young people should know this truth in advance. The ignorance of it has probably engendered more discouragement and faint-heartedness in youths embarking on arduous careers than all other causes put together."

Heredity

Heredity and ideals likewise help to shape our character. While we do not have the power to choose our ancestors, we do have the power to choose our ideals. It is for each of us to make the most of what our parents bequeath us. That is the least we should undertake. More no one can ask of us. It will be well to try to come to an understanding of our nature with its resources and its limitations. "Know thyself" was Aristotle's first step in the intelligent sculpturing of character. In spite of all the light modern psychology throws upon the working of our minds, with its neurological correlates and the drives which come from the subconscious, there are many regions still shrouded in darkness. "There is a great deal of unmapped country within us" observes George Eliot in *Daniel Deronda*, "which would have to be taken into account in an explanation of our gusts and storms."

Dr. William A. White and Dom Thomas V. Moore have written illuminatingly, in their respective works, *Mechanisms of Character Formation* and *Dynamic Psychology*, of those hidden depths whence spring many of these squalls. What light the prober into the subconscious can shed upon the phobias, tics, and complexes which snarl the even functioning of the mind, and the methods of unsnarling the same, should of course be welcomed by all who are eager to make the most of their inheritance. Many of the therapeutic values of psychoanalysis and of psychiatry, it is comforting to know, are made available in a simple and practical manner in the Catholic confessional, as the writer has pointed out elsewhere.⁷

⁷ *Psychiatry and the Confessional*, by John A. O'Brien, in *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, March, 1938.

VI

IDEALS—SOURCES OF POWER

WE come now to ideals. They are the sources of the power which molds our conduct, the well-springs of the inspirations which shape our aspirations and our dreams. They are the blue prints according to which we would build our character. They should be for us what the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night were for the Israelites in their journey to the Promised Land—the lodestars in the charting of all our paths.

Without high ideals there can be no lofty character. As water cannot rise above its source, neither can character rise higher than the ideals to which allegiance is proclaimed. We should pay homage to the ideals of justice, honor, truth, righteousness and love not only in the realm of those abstract universals wherein Plato discerned the scaffolding of the moral universe and the evidence of God, but also in their concrete embodiment in the particulars of our daily conduct. The man of character must render these ideals incarnate. They must be assimilated into his moral nature and become part and parcel of his being.

Hierarchy of Values

In the intelligent ordering of his life, one must first set up a hierarchy of values. Man lives in many planes—the physical, the social, the intellectual, and the spiritual. The values which conduce to his well-being in this ascending scale will rank accordingly. Hence it is a matter of primary importance that man should not purchase a physical value, a gratification of the senses at the cost of a spiritual value. He should not sell his soul for a mess of pottage, for thirty pieces of silver, nor for all the wealth of Croesus.

“What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, but

suffer the loss of his own soul?"¹ To which question, the only answer that man has ever been able to find, is: It profiteth him nothing. For a single human soul will outweigh the physical universe. God and the human soul are the supreme values. The ultimate criterion of every value is the measure in which it enables the human soul to achieve its final destiny—union with God, the fountainhead of all values.

Stressing the necessity of subordinating the lower to the higher in a rational scheme of values, St. Thomas Aquinas puts it thus simply: "In the natural order man's body is for his soul and the lower powers of the soul for reason. It is therefore naturally right for man so to manage his body and the lower faculties of his soul so that the act and good of reason may least of all be hindered, but rather helped. Mismanagement in this regard must naturally be sinful. We count, therefore, as things naturally evil carousings and revelings and the disorderly indulgence of the sexual instinct, whereby the act of reason is impeded and subjected to the passions which do not leave the judgment of the reason free.

"To every man those things are naturally fitting whereby he tends to his natural end; and the contraries are naturally unfitting. But God is the end to which man is ordained by nature. Those things, therefore, are naturally right whereby man is led to the knowledge and love of God; and the contraries are naturally evil for man."²

A Universal Love

The supreme ideal which Christ holds up before the eyes of all mankind is that of a constant, universal love that embraces all our enemies. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," said the divine Master, "with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind. This is the first and the greatest commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. In these two commandments de-

¹ Mark viii. 36.

² Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, III, 129 23, Nos. 2, 6, 7, Rickaby's translation.

pendeth the whole law and the prophets.”³ These two commandments mirror the essential nature of God, in Whose likeness we must daily strive to grow. The best definition of God ever given is the simple one of St. John: “God is love.”

The classic exposition of love as the supreme value in human life is the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. With a simplicity of language and a pregnancy of thoughts, of which Lincoln’s *Gettysburg Address* constitutes one of the few approximations, St. Paul sounds all the notes in the gamut of this mighty virtue in the following noble utterance:

If I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never falleth away: whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child. But, when I became a man, I put away the things of a child. We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face. Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known. And now there remains faith, hope, and charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity.

³ Matt. xxii. 37 f.

Unselfishness Develops Character

Christ, however, did not allow love to remain as an abstract ideal. He applied it to human life. He formulated it into the law of surplus service which He substituted for the old Mosaic law "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." After referring to the *lex talionis* just mentioned, Christ says: "But I say to you not to resist evil: but if one strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him also the other. And if a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two."

In the rendering of that superabundant service, more than the law of justice and equity could demand, in the rising above the merely human instinct to strike back, and in returning love for hatred, will be found one of the most important laws for the development of character. In the measure in which individuals fulfill this law of surplus service will be found the measure of the spiritual progress of mankind. It is the un-failing index of the race's progress in social altruism, the unerring gauge of the spiritual qualitiveness of human life, the accurate register of nobility of character.

The surplus that is rendered in helpful service, in kindness, in love, is not lost but becomes part of the common spiritual treasury of the race. Like the Egyptian granary filled at Joseph's order during the seven fat years, it tides mankind over the lean years of selfishness, war and spiritual famine. Like a mighty reservoir that holds the answer to the cry of all life in time of drought, it rescues the race from extinction in periods of crass materialism and spiritual aridity, when man acts on the principle of "an eye for an eye," and measures his payments in terms of cold calculating justice. When man pays dividends merely in justice and not in love and generosity, he but treads the weary treadmill of spiritual standpattism, stretching the *status quo* into the shadows of eternity, and anchoring the race in the bog of spiritual barrenness. It is the surplus in service, in kindness, in love which constitutes the

lifting power of the universe, the lever which elevates human life from the lowly swamps of selfishness to the mountain peaks of magnanimity and nobility of character.

"Unprofitable Servants"

The insistence by Christ upon the necessity of doing more than is commanded, if one is to achieve any marked spiritual progress, is brought out vividly in two further instances. After alluding to the servant who ploughed the field, fed the cattle, and performed nothing but the duties enjoined upon him, Christ turned to the disciples with the words: "So you also, when you shall have done all these things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do." The mere doing of what they "ought to do" established no claim to spiritual nobility or perfection of character.

They must do more than that. Only when the narrow channel of strict duty overflows with the surplus in generosity, in kindness, in love is there a contribution to the spiritual treasury of the race and a stimulus to its progress. Only when the *lex talionis* and the cold calculations of legislative ethics are transcended in the surplus payments of a mighty and generous love that forgets the decimal points of strict justice, and pours itself out in torrents beyond all requirements, does one contribute to the spiritual dynamics which constitute the lifting power of the universe. Then and only then.

A second instance in which Christ emphasized the necessity of doing more than merely keeping the Commandments if one aspires for perfection, occurred during His encounter with the rich young man. In response to the query as to what he should do to enter into life, Christ tells him to keep the Commandments. When the young man replies that he has done this from his youth, Christ declares: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow me." It is to be noted here that the mark of Christ's discipleship is not the mere keeping of the Commandments. It is the doing of the

more than the law requires, the giving of one's riches to the poor and the spending of one's life in the service of mankind.

The quality of doing more than is required is, then, the distinctive quality of the true Christian and the unfailing index of nobility of character. With his penetrating insight into human life, Shakespeare recognized this trait as the crown of the moral character. Thus in depicting the qualities of Desdemona in the ascending scale of their values, Iago places this as the crowning one, saying of her: "She is so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition, that she holds it a vice in her goodness not to do more than is requested." This is the attitude which Christ sought to make universal among His followers, and the distinctive mark of His discipleship—the attitude of regarding as a vice in one's goodness the failure to do more than is requested.

Love Opens Sightless Eyes

Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War in President Wilson's cabinet, tells an amazing story of the power of a mighty and a generous love that overflowed the bounds of duty with deeds of superabundant service and kindness. While visiting the worst casualties of the American army in the Federal hospitals, Mr. Baker came upon one that stirred him deeply. He was a veteran who would seem to have been as frightfully mutilated as any soldier that came out of the holocaust alive. Both legs were gone, one arm gone, blinded in both eyes, his face was terribly mutilated, and he was wheeled helplessly around the grounds of the hospital in a perambulator by a nurse. No one expected him to live.

Meeting some one from the hospital later on Mr. Baker asked:

"Did that young man live?"

"Did he live?" echoed his friend. "Why, he's married his nurse."

How marvelous, reflected Mr. Baker, is the capacity of

women to love those who stand desperately in need of loving and who pour out their love for the sheer joy of giving.

Several years elapsed, and the incident had almost faded from his mind when Mr. Baker, as a trustee of Johns Hopkins University received a letter from its President. The letter informed him of the plan of the University to do an unusual thing, to hold a mid-semester convocation to confer the Doctor of Philosophy degree upon a young man who in spite of being heavily handicapped had done one of the most brilliant pieces of research work ever done at the University.

To his amazement the name was that of the crippled veteran—William Harrison Craig. Still incredulous, Mr. Baker investigated further and discovered that it was none other than the mutilated soldier whom nobody had expected to live, much less to shove back the boundaries of our darkness. When the crippled scholar was wheeled across the stage to receive the highest honor within the competency of Johns Hopkins, the students and faculty stood up and cheered as they had never cheered in all the history of the University.

As I read this story, I wondered: Was there not another person in that story who might well have received a doctorate. What about that gracious, kind and radiant nurse who did not stop with the routine duties of a nurse, but who bathed this helpless invalid with her love and tenderness? With all due credit to the plucky veteran for his magnificent achievement, is there any one, I wonder, who can withhold his meed of admiration from that great-hearted woman whose love opened those sightless eyes to ferret out new truth from nature's tangled skein, and who inspired him with the will to live, to struggle, to achieve.

An inspiring love like hers, that did not stop to count the cost, but poured itself out in torrential streams of devotion, service and sacrifice is the hidden lining of the story of more superlative achievements than this world dreams of. Love that flows over the bounds of duty, that forgets itself in the ministry of others, that asks only the joy of giving, only the privilege

of serving, sacrificing and dying for its beloved, is the one force which lifts the universe. It shines with the white radiance of eternity, and discloses to us most authentically the essential nature of God. For where noble, unselfish, sacrificial love is, there is God. Where God is, there is Heaven.

VII

THE SECOND MILE

THE men and women who have made the greatest contributions to human welfare, who have blazed new trails through ethical jungles, and have carved their names most deeply upon the grateful hearts of the race, are those who did not stop to count the cost in labor, in love, in sacrifice. They threw their lives upon the altar of mankind's progress, esteemed the sacrifice as naught, and regretted only that they had but one life to give.

"The men," observes Dr. H. E. Fosdick, "who have struck humanity's life as the shaft of water strikes the turbine at Niagara, saying, 'Move,' have been men who knew that 'God does not always pay wages on a Saturday,' and so were willing to serve on through all hostility, to help the very humanity that cursed them while they blessed. The roll-call of the world's spiritual heroes reveals not a single one-mile man. For no man ever saved anybody, or served any great cause, or left any enduring impress who was not willing to forget indignities, bear no grudges, and, like Paul when the Jews had cast him out of their synagogues, had beaten, stoned, and all but killed him, say, 'I could wish myself accursed for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh. . . . My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.' The world's saviors have all, in one way or another, loved their enemies and done them good. All of saviorhood lies in the second mile."

It was the perception of Christ's law of surplus love and service which transformed Toyohiko Kagawa into one of the noblest ethical characters of Japan, an apostle of social justice, a defender of the rights of the poor and lowly, a pleader for peace amidst the raucous shouts of the Nipponese for war. It caused him to share his little shack, about ten by eight, and his meager food, with a beggar. In this little hut in the slum district of Osobe, he wrote his radiant songs of Jesus and his books which have carried the winsome picture of Christ into the hearts of hundreds of thousands of his countrymen.

When confronted by a bully who demanded his few coins to buy liquor, Kagawa refused. Whereupon the bully rained blow after blow upon his face, knocking out several of his teeth and causing the blood to stream from his lips. But Kagawa did not strike back. His vision of Christ, buffeted, spat upon and saying, "If any one strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him the left also," restrained him. Terror-stricken at the strange spectacle, the bully fled in dismay.

For there is something deep down in the heart of man that crumples at the sight of a person who innocent, defenseless and unafraid bears the buffetings and blows heaped upon him without striking back. Physical force falls to its knees in awe when confronted with the moral might of the naked human soul. Kagawa has made the hearts of uncounted thousands in the Orient burn with a new love for Christ as he walks the second mile among them with a love that never stops to count the cost in labor, in kindness, in sacrifice.

Love Casts Out Fear

It was the perception of this law which took possession of Albert Schweitzer, eminent in philosophy, theology, Scripture and music. Learning of the plight of the natives of the Lambarene district in the Belgian Congo, with no doctor to minister to their many ills, he surrendered his chair at Strassburg, studied medicine, and for fourteen years has ministered as a physician to the most neglected of God's children in

equatorial Africa. Upon the heartstrings of these people he has played a nobler melody than ever he played upon the great organs of Europe—a melody singing into their hearts the thrilling song of Christ.

An incident in the Spanish Civil War illustrates a love that did not strike back but returned love for hatred. When the lust of the Reds to burn churches, hospitals, convents and to kill priests and nuns was at its height, an old priest was being led out to face the firing squad. His hands were tied.

“Please cut these ropes,” he said, “that I may bless you.”

Seizing an axe a Communist hacked off not only the ropes, but his hands. Lifting his mangled arms above the executioner’s head, the venerable priest moved his bleeding stumps in benediction over him.

“I forgive you,” he said, “and may God forgive you and bless you.”

When many of the battles in that tragic war will have faded into oblivion, the memory of this act of heroic love will live. When the passions subside, and reason returns, the memory of this act will teach friend and foe alike that the highest courage and the greatest heroism are found not in the deeds of carnage and slaughter but in a refusal to strike back, in forgiveness, in a love that embraces enemies. Such a love is the crowning glory of every noble character.

Jesus showed us the way to this nobility of character when nailed to the Cross, with the executioners torturing His thirsting lips with vinegar mixed with gall, and with the centurion piercing His side in quest of the last drop of His blood, He uttered the prayer: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” There is the love that embraces enemies, that washes away all hatred and knows no fear. Love needs no defense. Love does not fail. For back of the man who wields only the weapon of love are rallied all the moral forces of the universe, giving a cosmic potency and a divine efficacy to his weapon of straw.

To love those who hate us is not easy. It is, however, the

distinctive mark of the true Christian, the unfailing test of nobility of character. It begets the richest premium in peace of mind and happiness both in time and in eternity. When St. John, who penetrated farther into the mystery of love than any other human, wrote: "Perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath pain," he epitomized for all mankind a volume of psychotherapy which psychiatrists will be but unraveling for centuries to come.

We all need to utter the words of Rosa Marinoni in her "Plea for Greater Strength":

I do not want
The bravery of those
Who, gun in hand,
Rush forth to slay their foes,
Not hatred, greed,
Or glory of conquest,
Would I find rooted
In my human breast.
But this, O God, I ask:
"Please make me strong
To offer love to those
Who do me wrong."

In an upright life, an unfaltering faith and a love that embraces enemies, mankind has a divine prescription for the conquest of fear, the attainment of character and the achievement of that high courage of soul which looks out into the faces of men through eyes that are unafraid.

The Noblest Work

The man of character is one, therefore, who has accustomed himself to act habitually on the motives of an all-embracing love. Scorning the tendency to strike back, the man in whose character love is enthroned will repay hatred with love, injury with forgiveness, and in so doing will esteem himself to be

privileged to walk humbly in the footsteps of the gentle Christ. The man of character will scorn the base, the mean, the petty, the vulgar. He will have a chastity of honor which will feel the slightest blemish as an ugly wound. He will be truthful, honest, fair in his public dealings and in his private thinking. The man of character is a concrete illustration of the truth of Pope's utterance: "An honest man's the noblest work of God."

Character is manifested most clearly by deeds of restraint and self-control. The day before Britain and France declared war on Germany, the writer was traveling in a train from London to Oxford. Into the compartment, meant for eight, were jammed at least twenty. Many of them were mothers taking their children to safer territory. In lifting his valise to the rack above the seats, a recruit struck a young mother in the face with the corner of the suitcase. It was a painful blow causing the eye to become discolored. "Dreadfully sorry," was all he said. In spite of her stinging pain, the mother smiled understandingly, and uttered not a word of complaint. There was character, strong, disciplined, eloquent in its silent self-restraint. Men and women of such character in a world where there is so much irascibility and pettiness are, in George Eliot's phrase, like "a fine quotation from the Bible . . . in a paragraph of today's newspaper."

In order to secure such self-mastery, self-denial and self-discipline are necessary. The appetite which is always pampered, petted and indulged, becomes imperious and domineering. By denying oneself at times pleasures that are lawful we strengthen the muscles of the will, so that it will be more capable of resisting pleasures which are unlawful. We thereby fortify the enthronement of our conscience and our intellect over our appetites and cravings. Then when the temptation comes we shall be able to stand unshaken.

Promotes Happiness

Strength of will which comes through self-denial and discipline is necessary to success in every line of endeavor—in

literature, in science, in art, in commerce, in athletics. Look at the athletes who are training day after day on the cinder track. See those muscles of theirs, at first soft and flabby, change under the dint of daily discipline until they become as sinews of iron. So it is with the Christian, whose will at first soft and flabby gradually becomes like iron under the lash of daily discipline. This strength of will developed by spiritual exercises carries over into every department of life—making for success in scholarship, in athletics, in business, in life.

Not only does it make for success, but it makes for that subjective correlate of success—happiness and peace of mind. True happiness is found not in the enslavement of the will to the passions, but in the enthronement of the conscience and the will over the appetites and the instincts of man. There is found that deeper and truer happiness which is not dependent upon external circumstances, but is found within—in the kingdom of the mind.

Some years ago the students at the University of Illinois honored at a public mass meeting Alec Morrison, who carried the colors of Illinois to victory at the Olympic games at Amsterdam by winning the welterweight wrestling championship of the world. After congratulating him upon his great achievement, I asked him how long he had trained for the contest.

“Father,” he said, “scarcely a day has passed in the last seven years that I haven’t gone through some special exercise designed to prepare me for that encounter.”

No wonder that he was as hard as iron and steel and able to withstand the assaults of the best wrestlers among all the nations of the world. If men toil and discipline themselves through rigorous self-denial to win a race for an earthly prize, how much greater should be our zeal and earnestness in seeking to win the race of life that leads to a crown of imperishable glory!

Mental Discipline

Not less necessary than the discipline of the body is the discipline of the mind. "Man's intellect," observes Carrel, "must be kept supple by discipline. In Plato's Academy young men debated political and moral problems with each other and their elders. During the twelfth century, students walked a hundred miles to hear Abelard deliver a single lecture. Today our young people slump into a silly cinema, or seek the jittery stimulation of a radio band. This flagrant waste of life's formative years arouses no protest from parents. It is shocking. The intellectual teeth of a whole generation are rotting from disuse while tough social and political problems beg for vigorous mastication. There is not one of us who cannot become a well-informed expert on at least one problem, and exert an influence toward its proper solution.

"Active participation in some phase of civic life is the ideal outlet for the unused energies of our young people. Quite generally, children fail to learn in school the nature of their relation to the community. In every community there are specific problems to which they can address themselves. Today, no one, young or old, can remain a passive observer of the stupendous events going on about us. Our national destiny is inseparably bound up with our individual resourcefulness and initiative." ¹

Moral Discipline

Moral power likewise is achieved only through discipline. The crowning jewel in the human personality is spiritual beauty which radiates peace, power, and tranquillity. How is this power achieved?" "Let me tell you," answers Carrel, "of a student friend of mine. Idealistic, ambitious, and believing the Christian saints were the most highly vitalized sources of moral energy, he chose as his pattern St. Aloysius, patron saint of students. Emulating Aloysius, he practiced self-dedication, arduous study and ascetic control. Rigorously he exercised

¹ *Ibid.*

his moral faculties, strengthening them by daily use. Small consistent gains were hammered into lasting virtues, until at last something of the spiritual grandeur of St. Aloysius enters this young man, shines through him, influences his life and those about him.

“Self-conquest is not easy. Yet once acquired it brings to the individual the true joy of living. Those who have experienced the magnificence of this feeling are no longer content with a continuous round of puerile and vapid pleasures.”²

Christ's Self-Control

If one will study with care the character of our Divine Saviour as portrayed in the Gospels, he will find it adorned in an eminent degree with all the qualities which have distinguished the illustrious heroes of the world. Wisdom, power, mercy and love shine forth luminously from His sublime personality. But as one studies that complex character at greater length and secures a more penetrating insight into it, he gradually becomes conscious that there is some subtle quality there, blending all these into a harmonious whole, which is lacking in the character of the great heroes of the world. There is no jar, no jolt, none of the strange inconsistencies that glare out at us from the lives of the secular heroes.

That quality is the Saviour's perfect self-mastery, self-control. Never for an instant in all the scenes of the Master's earthly life is there an incident wherein a rash, hasty, headstrong action mars the even tenor and the surpassing beauty of the Saviour's unfailing equanimity and perfect self-control. Washington's greatness bears ever the tarnish of his profanity and ill-temper. Napoleon's glory is dimmed by his uncontrolled concupiscence. But when on trial of His life before the court of Caiphas, when buffeted and spat upon by His executioners, even when stripped of His garments and nailed to the Cross, the Master shows no sign of anger or vindic-

² *Ibid.*

tiveness. Never for a moment does He lose that marvelous mastery of Himself.

That is one of the reasons why the name of Jesus stands out among all the names in human history—the solitary example of perfect self-control. As Richter has said: “The purest among the strong, and the strongest among the pure, Jesus lifted with His wounded hands empires from their hinges and changed the stream of centuries.” He taught man the greatest of all arts—the art of self-control.

Self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control

In these alone lie sovereign power

Who conquers self, rule others

Aye, is lord and ruler of the universe.

The person who would develop strength of character must learn the lesson of self-discipline. It is one of the most essential elements for success in the earthly and spiritual warfare which we wage. The paths of life are strewn with the wrecks of men and women conquering others, mastering the arts, unlocking the secrets that lay hidden for countless centuries in the unfathomed bosom of the earth, only to fall victims to their own lusts, perishing in their own unconquered wilderness.

“Is It Worth While?”

Especially important in these days, when we are injuring each year more than 1,000,000 and killing about 36,000 with motor cars, is restraint in the use of liquor. The tipsy driver has become the murderer *par excellence*. Sobriety is of supreme importance. Many a person has brought ruin, misery and shame upon himself and his family through intemperance. In the case of young people who lack the natural restraints which come from maturity and experience, it is wiser to abstain entirely. There are also adults who, because of a peculiar type of nervous system, or a defect of the will, cannot indulge with moderation. These should avoid drinking as they would avoid an occasion of sin.

Some years ago I received a call at night to minister to a dying man. He was in a cheap lodging house downtown in the slum section of the city. After groping my way up a narrow stairs, I found him lying on a cot in a room that was almost bare. He was a man of about fifty, prematurely aged, his hair almost gray, and deep lines in his face. The pallor of death was on him, and he knew it. He had been on a prolonged spree, had gone through the throes of delirium tremens, an internal hemorrhage had occurred, and death was a matter of hours. I heard his confession and gave him the last sacraments.

"Father," he said, "I have a wife and family back home in Bridgeport, Conn. I had a good job until I lost it through drink. Rather than bring further shame and disgrace upon my family, I left home. I have been roving about since like a tramp, exiled from all my friends and from the family whom I love, because I could not overcome the passion for drink. Father," he said, as I was leaving, "I would give anything in the world if I could but start again, free from this terrible habit which is pulling me down to a drunkard's grave."

If I could have gathered into that room all the young men and women who are starting the habit of drink, and have had them gaze upon the tragedy before me, a man wrecked in body, mind and soul, dying a drunkard's death, would they not ask themselves: "Is it worth while? Am I not better off without it?" As I went down the creaking stairs, out into the darkness of the winter night, the words of the dying man echoed in my ear. I prayed that God might protect the youth of our land from the fate that had befallen him.

VIII

THE INFLUENCE OF CHARACTER

CHARACTER is both more infectious and more influential than mere intellect. The man who exercised as deep and wholesome an influence upon the student body at the Univer-

sity of Illinois over a period of forty years as anyone was George Huff, a varsity coach and athletic director. Why? Because he stood in the eyes of all who knew him as a synonym for fairness and clean sportsmanship. An incident will illustrate.

“Before a crucial game between Illinois and Michigan, that would have a decisive bearing on the Big Ten Championship in basketball,” relates the veteran referee, Brick Young, “Mr. Huff called me into his office. I had heard of efforts by coaches to pressure officials before big games to give their team the breaks in any doubtful decisions. I wondered what was up. But I hadn’t long to wait.

“There was a good deal of feeling last year, Mr. Young,” he quoted Huff as saying, “when these two teams played here. Students in their excitement jumped out on the floor and booed unfavorable decisions. I have asked them not to engage in such unsportsmanlike conduct. But under excitement some may forget themselves, and I apologize to you now if they are guilty of any ungentlemanly conduct.

“Now,” continued Mr. Huff, “I have one request to ask. If there are any doubtful decisions, as there probably will be, decide everyone in favor of Michigan. They are our guests, and I want them shown every courtesy and favor.”

“We were alone,” said Mr. Young. “These words were meant only for me. But nothing in twenty years of officiating has touched me more deeply.”

In that little incident the character of George Huff shone forth. Manly, square, honest, he would rather see his team go down to defeat than to win by questionable decisions. He was honest to the point of standing over backwards. If the athletic fortunes at all the big universities of our land were in similar hands, there would be no fear of professionalism and none of the underhanded proselytism and camouflaged bribery now so rampant. Is it any wonder that his influence radiated beyond the department of varsity athletics and intramural sports and infected the whole student body, so that he became

for them the shining symbol of an honesty that never faltered? Well might we say of him what Julia says of Proteus in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*:

His words are bonds, his oaths are oracles;
His love sincere, his thoughts immaculate;

* * * * *

His heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth.¹

"I Apologize"

The man who has exercised the deepest influence upon the students at Notre Dame is Knute Rockne. The writer first met him in 1912, when as an obscure player on a college football team that essayed to do battle with Notre Dame on old Cartier Field, he got first hand impressions of the wizardry of Rockne in action with Dorais and Eichenlaub. Since then Rockne's stature has bulked large. His fame is nationwide and the memory of his wit, humor and sportsmanship are among the hallowed traditions of a campus on which many a football great has fought his way to glory and renown. Running as threads of gold through all the incidents of the most colorful figure in the football world was the shining splendor of an honest and noble character lighted by the fire of genius. Many of the incidents have been recorded in print or cinema. Here is one, however, never published before. Narrated to the writer by Joe Petritz, an intimate of the great coach, it reveals an aspect not too generally known.

"Back in 1930," narrates Joe, "there was a husky, Irish tackle who gave promise of great things to come, when suddenly he went lame. 'Sprained ankle,' he said, when Rock asked what was up. But when it persisted after all the usual treatment had been administered and an X-ray picture disclosed nothing, there were arched eyebrows among the squad when his name came up.

¹ Act II, Scene 7.

“ ‘He can’t take it,’ said some. ‘Yellow,’ said others. Rock himself, thinking the boy was kidding himself, went after him pretty roughly, seeking to free him from the delusion of injury which athletes sometimes experience.

“ ‘What’s the matter with that lily liver of yours,’ stormed Rock. ‘Quit kidding yourself. The sprain isn’t in your ankle. It’s in your head. The only Charley horse you have is between your ears.’ ”

“Try as he would, however, the tackle couldn’t snap out of it. He couldn’t help but limp. Toward the end of the season another X-ray picture was taken. It told a different story. There was a chipped piece of bone in the ankle for which the constant exercising had done no good. When the news reached Rock, he was silent. His brow knitted. What was he to do?

“He could have gone around and made a little apology to the tackle in private. But Rock didn’t. He waited till the football banquet for the entire squad. This, remember, was in 1930, when his team had come through for the second consecutive season with the national championship. Rock was then at the height of his fame, receiving the plaudits of millions. ‘The wizard of all the coaches’ the papers acclaimed him.

“ ‘Men,’ said Rock, ‘I’ve made a mistake. I’ve been wholly unfair to a man on the squad who has been fighting his heart out for the team in the face of a terrific handicap. There was no sprain in Dick Donahue’s head, but there was a chipped bone in his ankle. I make a public apology, and I want the record to show that Dick doesn’t know the meaning of the word *yellow*.’ And with that, Rock went over and clasped Dick’s hand while the squad cheered his name.”

“The Finest Work of Man is . . . ”

When the Board of Investigators was threatening to deflate intercollegiate athletics in general and football in particular, Rockne appeared as the spokesman of his brother coaches and made as stirring and memorable a plea in defense of athletics

as the nation has ever heard. Denouncing the prevailing softness which was sapping the virility of young men and turning out lounge lizards and tea hounds, Rockne pleaded for the lash of discipline, hardship, sweat and sacrifice. By more than a decade and a half he anticipated the warning of Dr. Alexis Carrel and other far-seeing leaders that the youth of America must learn to harden themselves morally, physically and intellectually.

"If I have learned any one fact in my twenty years of work with boys," he said, "it's this—the most dangerous thing in American life today is that we're getting soft, inside and out! We're losing a forceful heritage of mind and body that was once our most precious possession.

"We—these men and I—have given our lives to working that flaccid philosophy out of our boys' minds and bodies. *We believe the finest work of man is building the character of man.* We have tried to build courage and initiative, tolerance and persistence, without which the most educated brain in the head of man is not worth very much."

A Light in the Sky

Is it any wonder that the boys admired this man who taught them to take their victories humbly and their defeats without an alibi. They saw this man take raw decisions and heart rending defeats without a word of public criticism or complaint. They saw him throw in his third and fourth teams to save an opposing coach from the humiliation of too overwhelming a defeat. They saw him speak highly of his opponents and modestly of his own men.

They knew that whatever "boners" they might pull, that no matter how hard Rockne might ride them in private, that he would have no word of criticism for them in public. They knew that he had one pet phrase, when asked about any man who ever played under him, "He gave all that he had for the team and Notre Dame." Their reputations were safe in the tender hands of this stern man who taught them to fight with

courage of untamed tigers and to fight the hardest when the "going gets tough."

When the news of his death flashed across the country, stunning millions who felt they knew this intensely human and loveable personality as an intimate, its repercussions were nationwide. A little newsboy in Atlanta, Ga., had his papers spread on his favorite corner, when suddenly he glanced at the screaming headline, ROCKNE DIES IN PLANE CRASH. Turning his back on his newspapers, a small fortune to him, and hiding his face in his hands to conceal the tears that streamed down his cheeks, he shuffled disconsolately home. The bottom had fallen out of his world. His hero had died. A patch of color, red as the rose, streaked out across the Kansas horizons on that fateful evening in March, and left something of its crimson glory shining in the sky long after the sun had set.

Farmers running from their plows found near the wreckage of a plane the broken body of a man. Twisted around his fingers was a rosary. Rockne had practiced what he preached. When the plane was falling from the sky, and the "going was getting tough," Rockne was in there fighting, storming Heaven as he had so often stormed the Army line. He was storming it, however, not with charging tackles nor driving backs. Strategy called for a different line of attack. A line Rock was not slow to perceive. The spearhead of his attack as he flung himself against the gates of Heaven was . . . the rosary of Our Lady. Who will deny that it was the best "running interference" that any player ever had?

Life's Masterpiece

A soft amber light falls upon the bronze bust of this grizzled warrior in the Rockne Memorial at Notre Dame, reminding one of the Cathedral-like atmosphere of the *Hotel des Invalides* in Paris where the ashes of the mighty Napoleon rest in martial glory amidst the flags that waved on all his far-flung battlefields. The writer has witnessed many a young visitor stand in awe before the effigy of Rockne, as he seemed to hear the

famed warrior speak again his message to the youth of America: "Be men of honesty, of disciplined character, of high ideals, of courage under fire. Scorn the base and the vulgar, fight fair, and win the clean glory of an unblemished name."

Of Rockne might be applied the words uttered by Edward Everett in 1835 about Washington: "A great character, founded on the living rock of principle, is in fact, not a solitary phenomenon to be at once perceived, limited, and described. It is a dispensation of Providence, designed to have not merely an immediate, but a continuous, progressive, and never-ending agency. It survives the man who possessed it; survives his age—perhaps his country, his language."

Over the doors of the Post Office in New York are inscribed the words: "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." All the voices of earth and heaven are proclaiming to youth: Permit neither the lust for pleasure, nor the craving for wealth, nor the lure for popularity to stay you from the swift achievement of a character founded on principles and lighted by high and noble ideals. That is life's masterpiece. For then the edifice of your career will be founded on a rock which will stand like Gibraltar when the storms and the tempests beat upon it, only to find it standing still, upright and unmoved. Such a character is in the words of Shakespeare,

. . . an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken
It is the star to every wandering bark.

DISCUSSION CLUB QUESTIONS

Chapter I

1. What marvels has science placed at the disposal of people today?
2. What use are many of the civilized nations making of the discoveries of modern science? Why?
3. What message is a world in flames proclaiming to humanity?
4. What is meant by character?
5. Compare the man of character with the opportunist.
6. How does character differ from intellectual power?
7. Is character the same as reputation?
8. What is the difference between character and personality?
9. Contrast the characters of Alcibiades and of Socrates.
10. Describe the character of Jesus.

Chapter II

1. Character is the net resultant of what?
2. How do habits sculpture character?
3. How would you define habit? Why?
4. What is meant by automatism?

5. What are some of the marvels of automatism and why?
6. What is the ethical significance of habit?
7. What is the sequence from a thought to destiny?
8. What instance showing the force of habit does Huxley relate?
9. How is habit the fly-wheel of society?
10. What is the peculiar importance of the first six years of a child's life? Of the first twenty years?

Chapter III

1. Why should we make our nervous system our ally instead of our enemy?
2. Why is it wise to make habitual the performance of as many duties as possible early in life?
3. Why is a vigorous initiative important in the formation of a habit? Illustrate.
4. Tell the story of St. Augustine.
5. Why is it important to continue the initiative?
6. What do we mean when we say that effort is accumulative?
7. Who offers the classic example of perseverance?
8. Why should no exception be permitted to occur?
9. Why is this particularly true of sensuality?
10. What is meant by "tapering off"? To what habits would this apply?

Chapter IV

1. Why should one grasp the first opportunity to translate his resolve into action?
2. Why should emotion yield a precipitate of action?
3. What example did Rousseau set in this regard?
4. Why is full-hearted effort essential in forming habits?
5. Why is concentration of attention the index of efficiency?
6. Cite the experience of John Erskine in this regard.
7. Why should you tell your friends about your resolutions?
8. What instance does Jane Addams narrate in this regard?
9. What is the idea back of the vow?
10. Why is it well to tell your friends about your resolve to abstain from liquor?

Chapter V

1. Why is it well to start with little things rather than with big ones?
2. What does the author of "The Imitation of Christ" say of this?
3. Why is it wise to make the practice of the habit as pleasant as possible?
4. Why is a word of encouragement advisable to a beginner?

5. Why should one keep the faculty of effort alive in one?
 6. How is this best done?
 7. What is the testimony of William James? of Dr. Alexis Carrel?
 8. Why does St. Paul say it is necessary to mortify the flesh?
 9. What does William James mean when he says "the molecules are counting it"?
 10. Why is it well to understand one's resources and one's limitations?
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Chapter VI

1. How are ideals sources of power?
2. What is meant by a hierarchy of values?
3. What does St. Thomas Aquinas say in this regard?
4. What is the supreme ideal which Christ holds before us?
5. State in your own words St. Paul's exposition of charity.
6. How does unselfishness develop character?
7. What is the law of surplus service?
8. What two instances of the necessity of surplus service does Christ cite?
9. What is the mark of Christ's discipleship?
10. What does Iago say of the character of Desdemona?

Chapter VII

1. What is meant by "men of the second mile"?
2. How did Kagawa put the law of surplus love into practice?
3. Would you be able to act as Kagawa did?
4. How does love cast out fear? Illustrate.
5. Can you recite from memory Rosa Marinoni's poem?
6. Why may an honest man be said to be the noblest work of God?
7. How does self-control manifest character? Illustrate.
8. How does strength of will promote happiness?
9. Who offers the solitary example of perfect self-control?
10. Compare the character of Christ with the noblest of men.
11. Why is sobriety of such importance today?

Chapter VIII

1. Which is more influential, character or intellect? Why?
2. Narrate the story about George Huff.
3. Why does the direction of inter-collegiate sports require men of character?
4. Who has exercised the greatest influence on youth at Notre Dame? Why?

5. Narrate the story told about Rockne's apology.
6. How might he have squared himself with the player without a public apology?
7. In what spirit did Rockne take victory? Defeat? Raw decisions?
8. How did Rockne safeguard the reputation of his players?
9. State in your own words Everett's description of a great character.
10. Why is the building of a noble character life's masterpiece?

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