

## Right and Wrong Thinking

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

*Right and Wrong Thinking* shows us that everything that happens around us is the result of our mind and how it works. You can make the most of yourself by using your mind in the correct manner. This is an excellent book that can help you understand how your mind both creates your potential and limits it. This book was first published in 1905 and has been republished numerous times. It is a book I am sure you too will enjoy and can learn from.

--Harrison

## Right and Wrong Thinking

By Aaron Martin Crane

### PREFACE

Some years ago this book was born into thought by the perception of its fundamental principle, and it has been growing ever since. During the intervening years this principle and its allied ideas have been presented more or less fully in the form of independent class lectures to many groups of persons. It is with hesitation that it is now offered to the public in its present form, because it is still growing; but having seen the great advantages which have come to many from the practice of its principles, there arose the earnest desire to extend the opportunity for similar help to greater numbers.

The first lesson to be learned in the school of life is to understand one's own personality or individuality, so as to estimate it at its true value, and to be able to use it for good and to avoid using it for evil. A man should know all that can be known of the power which he is every day wielding simply by being what he is and by thinking, looking, speaking, and acting as he does. It is one's duty to make the most and the best of what is in him; and he is best equipped for this who knows himself most thoroughly. The object of this book is to aid toward the accomplishment of this end.

There appear to be two influences in this world of ours, the good and the bad or the harmonious and the discordant, which permeate all mankind and shape and control all human actions. Wherever there are two, if one is removed, the other remains; if the discordant is removed, the harmonious will be left. Good, the absolutely harmonious, must be the enduring and essential because it is from God. Then an important part of the work of every one is to remove the evil or discordant and thus uncover the good. This includes the whole scheme of reformation, improvement, and progress.

Much of this book is devoted to external matters which man can detach from himself and throw away. By shaking out of his mind every cumbering thought of discord and error he may disclose to view the real man in all the perfection which his Creator bestowed upon him, and thus rise to that divine height of purity and perfection which has heretofore been deemed inaccessible.

There is another topic, higher and even more attractive than this, which deals with the divine perfection inherent in man and in all creation; this is to be the subject of another book which is planned to follow this one.

**AARON MARTIN CRANE**

### INTRODUCTION

#### **CHAPTER 1**

Notwithstanding the immense amount of attention which has been directed in a broad general way to mind and its action, and although the constructive and creative ability of mind through thinking has been so long and so universally acknowledged, yet we are just now beginning to recognize the close and direct personal relation which thinking bears to man. The limits of the power of mind have never been clearly perceived, but recognition of their extent continually enlarges as knowledge and understanding increase.

The differences between ignorant and enlightened, between savage and civilized, between brute and man, are all due to mind and its action. All the multifarious customs and habits of mankind, whether simple or complex, though often attributed to other causes, are, from first to last, the direct results of thinking. The unwritten history of the evolution of clothing, from its rude beginnings in the far-distant and forgotten past through all the ages since man first inhabited the earth, though at first glance seemingly simple, yet, as a whole, is wonderfully complex and astonishing in its particulars. Its story is only the story of the application of mind to the solution of a single one of the vast multitude of problems connected with human requirements.

It is true that our factories and palaces, our temples and our homes, are built of earthly material, but mind directed their fashioning into the vast multitude of forms, more or less beautiful, so lavishly displayed by architecture in city and country. The multitudinous products of constructive art which are scattered in lavish profusion over the whole earth are marvelous exhibitions of what mind has done; and these are being multiplied daily,

All the mechanical triumphs of every age are products of mental effort. Without these men would be in the condition of the animals. It has been said that he owes his supremacy over the lower creatures to his ability to construct and use tools, but this also depends entirely on his superior ability to think. The steam engine is one of these tools; and the story of its creation and of the vast amount of mental effort which has contributed to its evolution can be written only in its larger parts because of the amount of time that has been expended upon it, the magnitude of the work, and the minuteness and complexity of its details.

In the domain of the fine arts more than elsewhere the creations are intimately connected with mental action and are distinctly marked as products of mind. Music, vocal and instrumental, the single singer or the multitude in the chorus, the one instrument or the great orchestra, the country boy whistling among the woods and hills or the grand opera in magnificent halls

—music everywhere, in all its varieties and types, is a product of mental activity and is a most subtle as well as most powerful expression of the mind of the composer. The dreams of the sculptor which have been revealed in marble, those of the painter in the figures on his canvas, the beautiful in all artistic creations or expressions, are the direct result of the finest thinking of the finest minds. What a world of them there is in existence! Yet the crumbling ruins of the past point to greater worlds of them which have been destroyed by man and time.

Even a yet more important product of mind is the literature of the world; in quantity, overwhelming; in variety, bewildering; in quality, whether ancient or modern, such as to excite the interest wonder and admiration. There is no greater monument to the mind of man than the things which that mind has produced in science, philosophy, religion, and letters. This has grown like those ancient monuments to which every passer-by added a stone, and it will continue to grow so long as the human race exists.

Civilization with all that the word implies in every one of its unnumbered phases, its origin, continuance, progress, and present condition, is directly and exclusively a product of mind; and man owes to mind and its action all there is in the external world except the earth and its natural products. All religious, political, and social organisms have their root in mind, and they have assumed their present forms in consequence of the profoundest thinking of untold generations of men. To the same source man owes his own position, which is superior to all else on the earth and "only a little lower than the angels."

Notwithstanding the recognition of all these facts, it has remained for the scientific men of the present day, through their own intellectual attainments and discoveries, to enlarge immensely upon this recognition and to show the complete supremacy and universality of mind in another domain. The horizon is rapidly widening in the direction of the mind's relation to man himself; and, as a result of the more recent discovery of facts, man is beholding undreamed of possibilities which he may achieve through his own mental control. From the vantage ground already gained, mental and moral possibilities are rising to view in the near distance beside which the attainments of this and all past ages shrink into insignificance.

Only in these more recent years has it been clearly perceived that mind action is first in the order of occurrence, and that it is the absolute ruler of man himself as well as of all these wonderful works which mind has created. Mind is the motor power and governs everything, everywhere; but man can control mind, and therefore, by that control, he may be the imperious dictator of his mind's entire course, and, rising thence to the highest pinnacle of possibility, he may become the arbiter of destiny itself.

### **RELATION OF THINKING TO BODILY ACTION**

#### **CHAPTER 2**

Mind is that which thinks. Thinking is mind action. Thought is the result of mind action. This is a statement of what mind does, but it is neither a description nor a definition of mind. We know about mind only through our consciousness of its action, but because of this consciousness we know what we mean when we speak of mind and say it is that which thinks.

In seeking for the sources of activity we find that in all human actions thinking is first in the order of occurrence; that is, man does not act unless he has first thought.

A word, even the most idle or habitual, noticed or unnoticed, must exist in the mind in the form of a thought before the vocal organs can utter it. Thinking may precede utterance only by a space of time

It may be well to note definitely that thinking is not itself a thing, but is only an action. Mind is the thing, just as the hand is the thing, and its motion is only its action. Too short to be measured, nevertheless the thought of the word was in existence in the mind before the word could be spoken; and the same is true of every other action. This statement is necessarily correct because an expression, whatever its form, is always the utterance, or outward indication or manifestation, of some intention, emotion, thought, or feeling, and can never precede what it expresses; hence an act never precedes nor outruns thinking, but must always follow it.

The mechanic first plans, and then he constructs in accordance with his thinking. The architect may find defects in what he has built and pull it down to build in accordance with another plan, but such incidents only afford added illustrations of the truth of the proposition. He had to think before he built; the destruction was the result of thinking that followed the building; it preceded the pulling down, and either thinking preceded the rebuilding. "If there is one thing more than another which seems to the plain man self-evident, it is that his will counts for something in determining the course of events."

But willing is the result of choosing, and both choosing and willing are modes of thinking.

This order of occurrence is fully illustrated in the simple act of lifting the hand. Contraction of the muscle causes the motion of the hand; an impulse from the nerve causes the contraction of the muscle; some action in the brain sends the impulse along the nerve; thinking is the motive power, and without it there would not be any action of brain, nerve, or muscle. These are only parts of a machine; over them all is the power of mind without which the machine could not move; just as without the fire there could not be any steam in the boiler, and without the steam there could not be any motion of the piston, and without the motion of the piston the machinery of the factory could not move.

Frequently something outside of the mind causes the mind to act; but had the mind not acted, there would have been no bodily action, or had the mind acted differently, the bodily action would have been different also. It was the mental act which caused the bodily action and gave to it its peculiar character. But the mind may act independently without any provocation or stimulation exterior to itself, and the motion of the body will occur just the same, showing that mind action alone is the essential in the process.

If we grant all that may be claimed for the influence of external things upon the mind, it still remains that the mind is the power behind all else in moving the body and that without it there would not be any motion. Additional and final proof of the truth of this proposition is found in the fact that if we remove the mind, as in death, the body cannot move. The nerves, muscles, tendons, and bones are parts of the machine —wonderful though inert—which the mind uses. In itself alone no portion of this machine has any more power than a crowbar when it is not grasped by the hand of the laborer. "All acts are due to motive, and are the expression design on the part of the actor. This is as true of the simplest as of the most complex actions of animals, whether consciously or unconsciously.

The action of the Amoeba in engulfing in its jelly, is as much designed as the diplomacy of the statesman, or the investigation of the scientist." But motive is a kind of thinking or a state of mind, and thus this statement by Cope, while it includes all the actions of the entire animal kingdom under one general proposition, declares that they are all due to mind and its action. The investigations of physiologists show how surpassingly wonderful is the force of mind when acting in connection with motion of the hand, even when looked at from a material point of view. The forearm, considered mechanically, is a lever.

The distance to the fulcrum from the point where the power is applied is, we may say, an inch. The distance from the fulcrum to the point where the weight lies in the hand is, say, fifteen inches. Then, in accordance with mechanical laws, the power put forth by the muscle to raise the weight must be fifteen times as much as the weight itself. An ordinarily strong man can raise a weight of fifty pounds. This means that the mind, acting through the muscle, in this instance exerts a force equal to fifteen times fifty, or seven hundred and fifty pounds. This is the force, represented in pounds, which the mind exerts in such a case.

But this is not all. If this same muscle which has operated under the force of seven hundred and fifty pounds should be removed from the arm and one end of it should be supported from a beam, a weight of fifty pounds attached to the other end would tear it asunder. This shows that the mind not only exerts a force of seven hundred and fifty pounds in lifting the weight, but at the same time a nearly equal force in holding the muscle together. A similar condition exists in connection with every muscular movement of the body.

There is an intimate and most wonderful relation between mind action and the action of the brain and nerve tissues, and between the nerve tissues and the various bodily organs. This relationship is such that certain actions of the mind set the nerves and muscles into activity. No one knows how the mind affects the brain to control it, nor how the nerve affects the muscle either to contract or to relax it. No one knows what the medium is between the mental and physical systems, nor even whether there is a medium. We only know that after the mind acts in its appropriate way these other actions follow in a certain order.

There is an extensive literature on this subject which sets forth many different theories and explanations. Some insist that no connection whatever exists between mind and matter, and therefore they claim that it is too much to say that these actions stand in the relationship toward each other of cause and effect; yet, practically, all admit that there will be no muscular or other bodily action if the mind does not act. This admission is sufficient because it sets forth exactly the condition which exists in connection with other cases of acknowledged cause and consequence. Thus, astronomers say that the sun causes the revolution of the planetary bodies, but they have never been able really to show that any connection exists between the sun and those bodies, nor to give any satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon.

Even if it be granted that the relationship is not that of cause and consequence, but merely uniform sequence, the sequence follows substantially the same form and order as cause and consequence. It makes small practical difference whether we call it a chain of sequences or a chain of causes and consequences. Therefore it is sufficient for the purpose of this discussion to say that mental action is the cause of bodily actions for the reason that bodily actions always follow appropriate mental actions, and never occur without their initiative.

It is universally admitted that the facts of sensation prove the action of the body on the mind, and in like manner the facts of volition just as conclusively prove the action of the mind on the body. For instance, pain may be claimed to cause a movement of the body; but between the pain and the movement was the mind action receiving the pain and directing those bodily actions. With this direction and adaptation pain has nothing whatever to do. It may be said that man eats because he is hungry, and that in this he is governed by physical sensation; yet the consciousness of that sensation is a mental act of perception without which he would not eat, nor would there follow any of those complicated actions connected with digestion and assimilation. Thus analyzed it appears that it is mind action which sets the whole train in motion.

In the normal person the mental control of muscular action is wonderfully developed. The muscle moves in exact obedience to the mental command, as seen in the delicacy and accuracy as well as the strength and force of the movements. Note the forming of a letter with a pen on the written page, the strokes of the artist's brush upon his canvas, the exactness of touch of the musician's fingers upon the keys when he produces the precise tone that is required for the expression of his music — everywhere that delicacy and exactness are desired in the muscle they are produced by the mental action. It is called the result of training the muscle; in fact, it is training the muscle to obey the mind. If the mind has such control over muscular action, why may not its control over the other functions of the body be equally influential?

It may also be well to note right here a distinction that has often been overlooked. The movement of the arm is not the result of will power. A man may will his arm to move as much as he pleases, but unless the mind itself acts in a manner different from simply willing the arm to move — unless the mind thinks something entirely distinct in character from the thought of willing — the arm remains stationary. Even if it should be contended that the motion of the arm is caused by will power, the fact still remains that will power is mind power because willing is a form of mental action and the result of choice, and choice is itself a mental action; therefore the general proposition that bodily action is the result of mental action is still correct.

These facts, clearly recognizable by every one, prove that the mind is not simply a group of physical conditions and combinations in action, nor is it a product of them, but that it is something entirely distinct from the physical system though acting on it, controlling it, and conferring on it powers which, in itself, it does not have; and since every bodily action may be resolved into elements closely similar to these here considered, if not identical with them in character and relationship, the proof becomes complete.

That which thinks is the master power which moves, directs, controls. The combination of brain, nerves, muscles, ligaments, bones — these constitute a most wonderful machine that the mind builds and uses.

### **INTENDED ACTIONS**

#### **CHAPTER 3**

All bodily actions may be separated into two classes, those intended and those not intended.

Thinking is the cause of all intended actions. The accuracy of this proposition is self-evident because intending, purposing, proposing, or designing is in itself thinking, and this kind of thinking is always the cause of this class of actions. One intends to call on a friend. If he did not think about it, he could not go. Having thought about it, if that thinking ceases, as, for instance, when he forgets, then going becomes impossible. This illustration, though simple, is conclusive of the truth of the proposition.

That a man has forgotten some mental action or was not aware of it when it occurred is no proof that it did not take place. A vast number of actions are preceded by unrecognized thoughts, but this does not furnish any exception to the universal truth of the proposition. On the contrary, it serves to sustain its accuracy; whether recognized or not, the thought was there in the mind doing its work. A person is often able to recall unnoticed thinking of which he would never have become conscious had not some subsequent incident directed his attention to it. Who has not been so absorbed in a book that at the time he was not aware of a conversation going on in the room, or even of remarks addressed to himself, yet afterward has distinctly remembered hearing them? Simple incidents like this show that thinking often occurs without conscious recognition of it by

the thinker. Psychologists say that the amount of unrecognized thinking is vastly in excess of that which is recognized.

The action of the skilled performer on the piano is an illustration of the way in which things that were at first the result of intended and clearly recognized thinking at last are done without any consciousness of that thinking. With the beginner every action is preceded by a fully recognized thought. The position at the piano, the poise of the shoulders and head, the control of the arms and hands, the action of the fingers, and just how they must be moved in each particular case for striking each key, and the force of each stroke—all these are the subjects of conscious thinking on the part of the student. Not a motion is made without previous thought, which includes not only the thought to move but also how that motion is to be accomplished. After long-continued repetition of the motions included in the first and simpler lesson, when each thought has, so to speak, worn its own peculiar channel into the brain and has become so familiar that consciousness of it has somewhat waned, then a more difficult lesson is undertaken. The thinking which preceded the simpler actions gradually disappears, being displaced or submerged by the attention given to more difficult ones, until finally all conscious recognition of it ceases. With each step the thinking connected with the preceding practice drops gradually out of sight until at last the performer's conscious thought is all directed to expression. This requires careful attention to each of the many difficult and more delicate peculiarities of every single motion which, in proper combination, express the soul of music. These motions are necessarily preceded by an immense host of unnoticed thoughts, because without them the performer would be motionless and the instrument dumb. Each step suggests to the mind the next one to be taken, and thus the series moves in its accustomed order. Each motion is the result of unnoticed thinking which is as intentional in its character as it was when the beginner consciously and purposely initiated it.

Baldwin records a remarkable instance of this kind of action: "The case is cited of a musician who was seized with an epileptic attack in the midst of an orchestral performance, and continued to play the measure quite correctly while in a state of apparently complete unconsciousness. This is only an exaggerated case of our conscious experience in walking, writing, etc. Just as a number of single experiences of movement become merged in a single idea of the whole, and the impulse to begin the combination is sufficient to secure the performance of all the details, so single nervous reactions become integrated in a compound reflex." But the "impulse to begin" is itself mental action, and without it no step of the performance could be undertaken.

This "impulse to begin" a certain piece of music which has been performed many times is followed by the thinking which produces the first motion, and that by the thinking and consequent action of the second, and so on to the end. The habit of thinking a certain series of thoughts, each thought succeeding another in an invariable order, becomes so fully established by constant repetition that, once begun, they follow each other in their regular order without the conscious volition of the thinker. But if this habit has not been fully established, or if it has fallen into disuse from lack of practice, then difficulties arise and conscious thinking has to be called into action.

This tendency to do again what has often been done is clearly stated by Baldwin: "The thought of a movement has preceded and led to the movement so often, that there is a positive tendency, at the nerve centers, to the discharge of the energy necessary to the accomplishment of the act along the proper courses."

The Italian psychologist, Mosso, has stated the case excellently. He says: "Every movement [in walking] is performed with difficulty; it is at first a task painfully learned; gradually it becomes less a matter of reflection; until at last one can scarcely call it voluntary. We may not call it automatic, because when the will to walk is wanting we do not move, but when we have once set out to walk or to make a journey, we may go on for a long time without reflecting in the least that we are walking. . . . Many have experienced such extreme fatigue that they have slept while walking. There are endless phenomena proving that movements that at first cost a great effort of the will, become at length so habitual that we perform them without being aware of it." The "will to walk," which is thinking, sets in motion that series of mind actions which results in walking, and the mind goes on controlling and directing the machinery of the body without the thinker's active consciousness.

Mosso's words here quoted would apply with equal exactness to any series of complicated actions. The writer does not consciously think how he shall form his letters and words as he traces them; his conscious thought is engaged with the idea he wishes to express; but thoughts he is not aware of are continuously directing the motions of the many muscles which move the pen aright.

Lack of continuity of sense excitation has been recognized by most people. When the hand is placed in contact with any object, there is, through the sense of touch, an immediate and definite consciousness of certain conditions. If the hand remains in the same position, simply resting there without effort, the consciousness of these conditions gradually disappears. Though the course of activity flows in the opposite direction, yet it is clearly recognized that the mind itself affects the physical activities very much in the same way that the sense excitations affect the mind.

In the sense excitations, continuous action results in their disappearance from the mental horizon. May not the elements of consciousness which are aroused by mental action fade out of sight in a similar way though the mental activity be as constantly present as the physical conditions under the hand? If so, this presents sufficient explanation of the disappearance from consciousness of those thoughts which have been made habitual by frequent repetition, and it also explains many, if not all, of those actions which are called reflex or automatic.

All this shows that "one thought of a movement," or "the impulse to begin," which is the mental intention to perform certain actions, is that which sets in motion the complicated machinery of the body, and its action could not occur without it. Therefore in every minute particular the proposition holds true that thinking, either noticed or unnoticed, is the cause of all intended action.

### **ACTIONS NOT INTENDED**

#### **CHAPTER 4**

Not only does thinking precede all intended human actions, but it also precedes all those which were not intended.

A person does not often shed tears because he proposes to do so. Usually tears come unbidden; frequently after every possible effort has been made to suppress them; yet they flow because of thinking which preceded them. The explanation is simple. It is the office of the tear gland to furnish a fluid to moisten the eye. The same delicate and intimate relation exists between the mental condition of grief and the action of the tear gland that exists between other varieties of thinking and muscular action. When the mind is filled with thoughts of grief, increased activity in the tear gland follows, its fluid is produced in an unusual and excessive quantity, and the eyes overflow.

Thoughts of grief acting upon the tear gland stimulate it to excessive action in just the same way that those thoughts which



constitute intention move the hand. The important fact in this connection is that although the weeping is not intended, it is caused by a particular mental action which precedes it. When the grief ceases, the excessive action of the tear gland subsides, the tears no longer flow, and the facial muscles return to their usual condition.

Entirely different actions follow if the thinking is of a humorous, witty, or ludicrous character. A great many muscles all over the body, but particularly in the chest, throat, and face, are thrown into violent spasmodic activity which is uncontrollable if the thinking is intense. This is clearly the unintended effect of thinking, because it often occurs when the desire not to laugh is very strong, showing that in such cases intention plays only a subordinate part. The laughter does not cease until the thinking that produced it ceases, and it is renewed with the renewal of that thinking. It is clear that these muscles move in response to the action of the person's mind, though without his intention to move them.

Every one is aware of many physical changes which are caused by changes in the mental conditions. The mental state of anger will make the heart beat more rapidly, send the blood rushing through the body with increased velocity, and flush or pale the face. Any sudden emotion of grief or pleasure, unexpected news, either good or bad, suspense or anticipation, waiting for news of some-thing impending, —these and many other disturbing thoughts make the heart beat faster or slower, or even stop it entirely, according to the character of the mental action. Thoughts of fear may cause a cold perspiration to break out over the whole body, send the blood away from its surface, or even cause such muscular tension or paralysis that severe illness follows, and sometimes death.

The unnoticed glandular changes are very numerous. Propose some particularly appetizing food to a hungry person, and instantly, without the slightest intention, the thinking sets the salivary glands into action. All the acts of digestion, assimilation, and general nutrition are of this kind. It has been shown conclusively that they are results of thinking, that they vary with the variations of the thinking, and that without it they do not occur; yet they are not intended, and we are not even aware of the existence of the larger part of them, nor of much of the thinking which produces them.

Recent physiological experiments show distinctly just what might have been expected from the common experiences of every one who has noticed the flow of saliva in response to his own thoughts. When food that he liked was offered to an animal, it caused not only an abundant flow of saliva, but of gastric juice as well, even though no food had entered the stomach. More than that, when the kind of food was recognized by the animal, the character of the secretion was adapted to it, so that each variety provoked the secretion of a special kind of digestive fluid. The better the animal liked the food, the more copious was the quantity of those fluids which are necessary to digestion. It was not necessary that the animal should even see or smell the food.

A purely mental condition caused by suggestion or the association of acts was enough, and it was shown that pleasure itself set the physical actions into motion. On the contrary, when food which was objectionable to the animal entered the stomach, secretion of digestive fluid did not follow. When communication between the brain and the stomach had been cut off, so that the mind could not send messages to the stomach and its glands, not a drop of gastric juice was produced even though the food which he liked had been shown to him or had been introduced into the stomach, thus showing that the presence of the food without any mental stimulus does not induce the actions attendant upon digestion and necessary to it. Something more than mere mechanical contact was essential.

These experiments show beyond question that digestion depends entirely, upon some mental process. Similarly, all bodily actions depend upon thinking, whether that thinking is intended or not; and without thinking, or when the thinking does not reach the organs which should act, as when the thought effect could not be communicated to the glands of the stomach, there is no bodily action.

It must be remembered, however, that there may be, and often is, a longer or shorter series of unnoticed bodily or mental actions between the inciting thought and the result which has attracted attention. The observed condition may be at the end of the series and far removed from the thought that caused it. This intervention of unnoticed intermediary incidents renders it difficult, and sometimes impossible, to discover the direct connection between the final event and the thinking that produced it. Inability to trace the connection between the observed consequence and its real cause does not destroy the truth of the original proposition that the cause existed in mental action.

Every sensitive person knows how the mental state induced by hearing bad news will sometimes interfere seriously with the act of digestion. Perhaps the victim wakes the next morning with a violent headache. His physician tells him that it is due to a disordered stomach. The mental condition of the day before has been forgotten by one and is seldom heard of by the other, therefore both insist honestly enough that the headache was not caused by mental conditions. Yet he would not have had the headache if he had not indulged in that discordant thinking which disturbed the action of certain nerves; this disturbance interfered with the normal action of the stomach, which in its turn affected the head. This is unintended bodily action caused by thinking, and shows how easily some of the incidents are overlooked which connect the cause with the observed consequence.

The necessity for the presence and action of mind is also seen in reflex actions and those which seem to be automatic. When the exterior or surface end of a nerve is excited, as by the prick of a pin, psychologists say that this creates an activity which extends along the fibers of the ingoing nerve either to some central ganglion or to the brain; that certain actions take place there, and then motor impulse is sent thence along the outgoing nerve to the appropriate muscle, producing in it the requisite action. These actions at the nerve centre must be more or less complicated and of peculiar character.

Something must decide what physical action should follow the recognized external conditions, and then it must select from all the other outgoing nerves the special one which shall carry the message to the particular muscle which should act, and must thus direct and control the specific action which that muscle shall perform. This may be merely to remove the hand from the position it occupied when the finger was pricked, or it may be to double the fist and inflict a blow, or it may be to cause certain complicated actions which shall re-move the offending object to another place. This is more than mere mechanics. It is the action of the master directing subordinates in accordance with the recognized requirements of the situation.

Whether the person is aware of it or not, there must be mental consciousness or recognition of the conditions at the end of the disturbed ingoing nerve, because something decides what is the appropriate action, selects from many others the proper agents to accomplish it, and inspires the action in those agents. In every such case there is selection or choice, and choice is itself a mental action based on consciousness, which is also mental. Discrimination must govern choice, and intelligence must direct the proceedings. It is only mind that examines conditions, decides whether or not to act, selects from a number of possibilities, chooses the kind of action to be undertaken by some one or many muscles, and sends forth its behest

through the appropriate nerve to the right destination.

In every case the muscular action is a manifestation of more or less consciousness of surroundings, discrimination, choice, and judgment. What occurs corresponds exactly to the mental recognition of the conditions. Because of repetition conscious thinking emerges less and less into view until it becomes habitual, and finally it passes entirely out of sight, and the action is called automatic or mechanical. A vast multitude of tendencies toward these actions are inherited from birth, but their origin was in the thinking of generations of ancestors.

Thinking which originates solely in the mind and has no connection with anything outside of it, may act upon the nerve tissues and originate brain, nerve, and muscle action, just the same as when there is some outside incident to suggest it. Baldwin says: "Suggestion by idea, or through consciousness, must be recognized to be as fundamental a kind of motor stimulus as the direct excitation of a nerve organ." All the organs of the body are subject to stimulation by purely mental states; that is, a nerve stimulus may come from within in the form of a self-originating act of the mind. Not only this, but psychologists and physiologists say that these thought impulses may be made to change nerve tracks already formed and even to originate new ones and thus find outward expression in better forms of doing. Not only will the severed nerve reunite, but even when a piece of the nerve has been removed, each of the two ends will send out filaments toward the other until they are joined again, provided the distance is not too great.

It may be urged that the purely involuntary muscles, so-called, act without previous thinking; but as already shown, a vast majority if not all of the reflex actions are clearly the results of intended actions which have been very often repeated. The distance from reflex action to what is known as involuntary action may be very short, and the division between them is never clearly defined so that it is often difficult if not impossible to decide which is to be called reflex and which involuntary.

Some biologists, reasoning from the known to the un-known, hold the opinion that all such actions are consequences of conscious thinking. Their reasoning is all the more convincing when it is remembered that mind is always attendant upon life, never being found separate from it, and that life is the progenitor and creator of all life; for life has never been found without antecedent life. Then mind acting in conjunction with life must be the power which sets the involuntary muscles into activity.

The heart beats without our conscious attention, yet we know that its action is greatly influenced by mental conditions, such as anxiety, grief, fear, or joy. Though we may not be able to discover any special action of the mind upon the heart to keep it going, yet when the mind is removed, as by death, the heart ceases to act. This is true of all the so-called involuntary organs, and shows the mind action of some sort is necessary to keep them in motion. We do not think for the purpose of making the heart beat, just as we do not think for the purpose of making the tears flow; but our thinking makes them flow and our thinking causes the heart to beat. In one case we are aware of the thinking, in the other we are not, just as the piano player is at one time aware of the thinking that moves his fingers and at another time is not.

The physical body, separate from anything else, is an inert material mass, incapable of originating any action; therefore all its action must be produced by something other than itself. That which causes its action must be mind.

The conclusion is unavoidable that thinking precedes and causes all those actions which were not intended as well as those which were intended. Since these two classes include all human actions, it follows that thinking, or mind action, is always first in the order of occurrence and is related to the bodily actions as a cause is related to its consequence.

### **A GENERAL PROPOSITION**

#### **CHAPTER 5**

Thinking is the cause of all that a man is and of all that he does. Then, since it is mind that thinks, it follows that mind is antecedent to thinking and to all that is caused by thinking; therefore mind is first. Mind stands as the cause behind all which thus far has been considered. This is not a new proposition; neither is there any mystery about it. It is within the comprehension of every one who has observed his own mental actions because it is a part of his own experience, and he finds within himself the proof of the proposition.

Up to this place the subject has been considered from an external point of view and the reasoning has been inductive in its character. There is an-other and larger method, the deductive, which results in the same conclusions, only it enlarges their scope and makes them universal in their applications.

God is the one infinite First Cause and, therefore, the cause of all. As the one cause, or Creator, He is the Creator of all. In one of the aspects in which He is recognized by man, God is Mind; therefore, in the largest and most inclusive possible application of the term, in the infinite whole as in each particular instance, mind and mind action is first in the order of occurrence because God is Mind and He is the first actor, and the originator of all that is. This is the statement of a universal proposition which includes all things that are.

Mind is an essential of man's existence; and its action, which he perceives within himself and calls thinking, is the first of all his actions in the order of their occurrence, and the cause of all the others. In this there is somewhat of likeness to the Infinite; and, though man and his activities are only incidents in the midst of immensity, yet, in this respect at least, he is following one universal order in obedience to one central universal principle. Just as all that exists is the result of the action of the infinite divine Mind, God, similarly all that man does is the result of the action of man's own mind.

### **AS SEEN BY OTHERS**

#### **CHAPTER 6**

A wise modern writer, following a declaration of Socrates, has said that we should never ask who are the advocates of any teaching, but only, is it true? A statement of philosophy or principle once made clear and understood is not strengthened by appeal to any authority. While all this is undeniably true, yet it is also true that the wisest of men feel added confidence in their opinions when they know that other wise men agree with them; hence any man may be excused if he feels more comfortable when he finds that others, who have given the subject more careful and thorough investigation than he himself has been able to give it, unite in the declaration that mind action precedes bodily-action as cause precedes consequence.

President Hali, of Clark University, is reported as saying, before a session of the American Medico-Psychological Society in Boston, that "the relations between the body and the emotions are of the closest," and "there can be no change of thought without a change of muscle." He also suggests the possibility that the right course in thinking might develop muscle as well as the right course of exercise. On President Hall's basis, if the proper course of thinking is maintained the muscles will take care of themselves.

Professor J. M. Baldwin, of Princeton, italicizing his statement, says: "Every state of consciousness tends to realize itself in

an appropriate muscular movement."

Professor C. A. Strong, of Columbia University, says: "Recent psychologists tell us that all mental states are followed by bodily changes—that all consciousness ideas to action. This is true of desires, of emotions, of pleasures and pains, and even of such seemingly non-impulsive states as sensations and ideas. It is true, in a word, of the entire range of our mental life. The bodily effects in question are of course not limited to the voluntary muscles, but consist in large part of less patent changes in the action of heart, lungs, stomach, and other viscera, in the caliber of blood-vessels and the secretion of glands.""

Professor James, of Harvard University, says: 'All mental states (no matter what their character as regards utility may be) are followed by bodily activity of some sort. They lead to inconspicuous changes in breathing, circulation, general muscular tension, and glandular or other visceral activity, even if they do not lead to conspicuous movements of the muscles of voluntary life. Not only certain particular states of mind, then (such as those called volitions, for example), but states of mind as such; all states of mind, even mere thoughts and feelings, are motor in their consequences.'" Language can-not be more positive or unequivocal, yet later he stated the case with equal clearness though perhaps in language a little less technical: -

"The fact is that there is no sort of consciousness whatever, be it sensation, feeling, or idea, which does not directly and of itself tend to discharge into some motor effect. The motor effect need not always be an outward stroke of behavior. It may be only an alteration of the heartbeats or breathing, or a modification of the distribution of the blood, such as blushing or turning pale; or else a secretion of tears, or what not. But, in any case, it is there in some shape when any consciousness is there; and a belief as fundamental as any in modern psychology is the belief at last attained that con-merely as such, must pass over into motion, open or concealed."

Professor Ladd, of Yale, says: "Even the most purely vegetative of the bodily processes are dependent for their character upon antecedent states of mind."

Professor Munsterberg, of Harvard, said, in his Lowell Institute lectures, that the slightest thought influences the whole body; and, further: "There is never a particle of an idea in our mind which is not the starting-point for external discharge," or in less technical language, the starting-point for some bodily action. In illustration he said that thinking increases the activity of the minute perspiration glands of the skin. This has been measured so accurately by the proper apparatus that it is possible to determine the activity or intensity of a person's thinking by its effects upon those glands.

Hudson says: "No scientist will deny the existence within us of a central intelligence which controls the bodily functions, and through the sympathetic nervous system actuates the involuntary muscles, and keeps the bodily machinery in motion."

An eminent French psychologist has stated the conditions correctly regarding fear, and incidentally of other emotions as well, when he says: "If we are ignorant of danger, we do not fear it;" and this is a plain statement of the experience of every one. Fear, as all know, is a mental action or condition, and therefore it follows that the acts caused by fear are the consequences of mental action.

The whole is admirably stated in the declaration: "He (the psychologist) acknowledges, in response to a logical demand, that every single psychical (mental) fact has its physiological counterpart." But this is no more than Professor James has said in his book, *Talks to Teachers*: "Mentality terminates naturally in outward conduct," and he might have added that this is unavoidable, for that idea is included in the preceding quotations from his pen.

Following in the same direction, the great English naturalist, Romanes, says the fact of selective contraction is the criterion of mind and the indication of consciousness, and he finds this fact of selective contraction in the lowest known creatures. He says also that "all possible mental states have their signs." These signs must necessarily be those of external physical conditions which result from mental states.

President McCosh, of Princeton, says of emotion: "It begins with a mental act, and throughout is essentially an operation of the mind. Examine any case of emotion and you will always discover an idea as a substratum of the whole."

Professor Mosso, the Italian psychologist already quoted, constructed an apparatus by which the body of a man could be balanced in a horizontal position. This was made so sensitive that it oscillated according to the rhythm of the respiration. He says: "If one speaks to a person while he is lying on the balance horizontally, in equilibrium and perfectly quiet, it inclines immediately toward the head. The legs become lighter and the head heavier. This phenomenon is constant, whatever pains the subject may take not to move, however he may endeavor not to alter his breathing, to suspend it temporarily, not to speak, to do nothing which may produce a more copious flow of blood to the brain."

He says of the same experiment when the subject was sleeping; "Scarcely had some one about to enter touched the handle of the door, than the balance inclined toward the head, remaining immovable in this position for five or six or even ten minutes, according to the disturbance produced in the sleep . . . When all was quiet, one of us would intentionally make a slight noise by coughing, scraping a foot on the ground, or moving a chair, and at once the balance inclined again toward the head, remaining immovable for four or five minutes, without the subject's noticing anything or waking. . . . It was proved by my balance that, at the slightest emotion, the blood rushes to the head."

These experiments show beyond question that the slightest possible mental activity changes the course of the blood and sends it to the head in such quantities as to destroy the equilibrium and to overweight that end of the body. They show also how the slightest thought has its physical effect, and, as in the case of the sleeping man, that the thought which is not perceived and does not awaken him is as certain to affect his condition as the one of which he is conscious.

Dr. William G. Anderson, director of the Yale gymnasium, has made similar observations upon the athletes of that University with like results. A man perfectly balanced on the table would find his feet sinking if he went through mental leg gymnastics, thinking about moving his legs without making the movements. This shows that it is thinking which sends the blood to the legs even when they are entirely at rest. He balanced students before and after their written examinations, and after the mental test found that the centre of gravity had changed toward the head, varying in different cases from only a sixteenth of an inch to almost two and a half inches.

Dr. Anderson says: "Experiments comparing agreeable exercises with those that are not so agreeable showed that movements in which men took pleasure set in motion a richer supply of blood than did those which were not to their liking. . . . Pleasurable thoughts send blood to the brain; disagreeable ones drive it away." Not merely the thinking but its character or quality influences the physical actions, and the old poet was right when he wrote: "In whate'er you sweat indulge your taste."

The stigmata are among the most extreme examples of the action of thinking in producing abnormal physical conditions. St. Francis of Assisi furnishes the earliest historical case. His contemplation of the wounds of Jesus was of such an intense

character and so long continued that his own body finally presented appearances similar to the mental picture which he had so long entertained. Not only were there similar wounds in his hands, in his feet, and in his side, but the appearance of nails in the wounds was so realistic that after his death the attempt was made to draw them out, supposing them to be really nails. There have been something like ninety or a hundred well-authenticated cases of a similar character since the time of St. Francis. For a long while it was believed by many that these conditions were results of self-inflicted wounds or that the story of them was mere fabrication. Some were probably fraudulent, but others were so well authenticated as to remove all doubt. Parallel cases of physical effects due to mental suggestion are well known. Experiments are now often performed in psychological laboratories which, by means of mental action, produce appearances similar to the stigmata. If abnormal physical conditions of such extreme character can be produced by thinking, certainly healthy and normal ones can be produced and maintained by the same means.

Professor Elmer Gates, of the Laboratory of Psychology and Psychurgy, Washington, D.C., showed the same motor influence and effect of mind action in an entirely different way. He plunged his arm into a jar filled with water up to the point of overflow. Keeping his position without moving, he directed his thinking to the arm, with the result that the blood entered the arm in such quantities as to enlarge it and cause the water in the jar to overflow. This is merely demonstrating by another method the same facts that were shown by Professor Mosso and Dr. Anderson.

Professor Gates went even further than this. By directing his thoughts to his arm for a certain length of time each day for many days he permanently increased both its size and strength, and he instructed others so that they could produce the same effect on various organs of the body, thus demonstrating the accuracy of President Hall's statement that muscle can be developed by a proper course of thinking as well as by exercise.

Professor Gates has shown the causative character of thinking in a long series of most comprehensive and convincing experiments. He found that change of the mental state changed the chemical character of the perspiration. When treated with the same chemical reagent, the perspiration of an angry man showed one color, that of a man in grief another, and so on through the long list of emotions, each mental state persistently exhibiting its own peculiar result every time the experiment was repeated. These experiments show clearly, as indicated by Professor James's statements, that each kind of thinking, by causing changes in glandular or visceral activity, produced different chemical substances which were being thrown out of the system by the perspiration.

When the breath of Professor Gates's subject was passed through a tube cooled with ice so as to condense its volatile constituents, a colorless liquid resulted. He kept the man breathing through the tube but made him angry, and five minutes afterward a sediment appeared in the tube, indicating the presence there of a new substance which had been produced by the changed physical action caused by a change of the mental condition. Anger gave a brownish substance; sorrow, gray; remorse, pink; etc.

This is distinctly a case where none of the actions were intended, and yet were clearly caused by thinking. In the experiments with the perspiration, that each kind of thinking had produced its own peculiar substance, which the system was trying to expel. Professor Gates's conclusions are very definite: "Every mental activity creates a definite chemical change and a definite anatomical structure in the animal which exercises the mental activity." And again he says: "The mind of the human organism can, by an effort of the will, properly directed, produce measurable changes of the chemistry of the secretions and excretions." He also says: "If mind activities create chemical and anatomical changes in the cells and tissues of the animal body, it follows that all physiological processes of health or disease are psychologic processes and that the only way to inhibit, accelerate, or change these processes is to resort to methods properly altering the psychologic, or mental, processes." \* That is, the most effective and best way to change these physical processes is to change the thinking. And again he says: "All there is of health and disease is mind activity." And once more: "If we can know how to regulate mind processes, then we can cure disease- all disease." In another place he says: "Mind activity creates organic structure, and organisms are mind embodiments."

In full accord with this is Professor Andrew Seth, of the chair of Logic and Metaphysics in the University of Edinburgh, who, at the close of a long argument showing the priority of mind, concludes: "But mechanism is thus, in every sense, posterior to intelligence and will; it is a means created and used by will. In a strict sense, will creates the reflex mechanism to which it afterwards deposes its functions." But will is a mental action or condition, therefore mind action is veritably first in the order of occurrence.

Cope, in summing up his exhaustive arguments on the subject, clearly and concisely declares the priority of mind and its creative power in these words: "Structure is the effect of the control over matter exercised by mind." A more definite statement is not possible; all physical structure is created and determined by mind as its cause.

Christison says: "It is a biologic axiom that function precedes organism; for while we may also say that necessity develops function in much the same sense that we say that it is the mother of invention, it is evident that the use of means to a given end implies the preexistence of a specific potentiality, having a plan in the abstract, for only the preexisting can be the cause of a necessity. Thus it follows that something of a mind must exist before a brain can be formed." ' In other words, the necessity must be recognized before it can produce any action; but that recognition of necessity is the mental action which precedes all the other actions.

The great Lamarck, the pioneer of Darwin, says: "It is not the organ, that is, the nature and form of the parts of the body, which have given origin to its habits and peculiar functions, but it is, on the contrary, its habits, its manner of life, and the circumstances in which individuals from which it came found themselves, which have, after a time, constituted the form of the body, the number and character of its organs, and the functions which it possesses."

Cope says: "The general proposition that life has preceded organization in the order of time, may be regarded as established." In connection with some consideration of "the law of use and effort," he says that "animal structures have been produced, directly or indirectly, by animal movements," and that, "as animal movements are primitively determined by sensibility, or consciousness, consciousness has been and is one of the primary factors in the evolution of animal forms." He adds further on: "The origin of the acts is, however, believed to have been in consciousness." All this points to the one fact that mind was the originator of organic structure, because consciousness is an action of mind.

Evans, discussing the initial activities, says the same thing: "In the germ of the animal body, as in the seed of the plant, there is the living idea of the future organism. And that idea forms the body after the pattern of itself. It is function (or idea) that creates the appropriate organ, and not the organ that makes the function. For instance, the heart is made to beat, and this action commences before its tissues are formed, even when it is only a mass of protoplasmic jelly. So it is always the



function, the idea, which creates its organic expression. Thus it is, and of necessity must be, in regard to the whole body." This array of authorities might be increased indefinitely. Enough have been quoted to show great unanimity of opinion on the fundamental proposition that thinking is first in the order of occurrence and that bodily actions follow thinking as consequence follows cause.

## **MUTUAL REACTIONS OF MIND AND BODY**

### **CHAPTER 7**

Mental and physical actions, though absolutely distinct, are most intimately connected. As day and night are closely joined by the intermingled light and darkness of twilight, so are the mental and physical activities of human beings, yet they are as clearly distinguishable from each other as light from darkness. In this chapter they are represented as entirely separate for the purpose of attaining a clear understanding of their mutual relations. They always occur in the following order:-

First. Mind action, or thinking, noticed or unnoticed, precedes all other action.

Second. Mind action is always followed by physical or bodily action of some kind, whatever may be the explanation of the connection or relation between the two.

Third. The mind perceives this resultant bodily action or condition.

Fourth. This second mental action unites with the first and already existent mental action or condition. The sum of both, in its turn, acts on the physical in the same way that the first did, and, by a force increased by the added impulse of the second, it increases, intensifies, or otherwise changes the resultant physical actions and conditions.

That is to say, the person becomes aware of the changed physical condition consequent upon his first thinking, and the mental state thus produced is added to the one already in existence. Thus a new mental condition is set up composed of the original thought which produced the first bodily action and of the other thought which succeeded that bodily action. In their turn these two combined again act upon the body with the increased force of their combination. In this way the mental and physical actions follow one another until something occurs to arrest the progress or change the course of the mental action.

An order of occurrence introducing other elements might be stated as follows: (1) mind, the thinker; (2) thinking, or mind action; (3) the thought or idea, the result of thinking; (4) choice, the result of combination and comparison of thoughts; (5) will, the determination to act; (6) action. But this analysis does not interfere with the above order nor weaken it.

It appears very clearly from the foregoing analysis that mental actions and conditions, in every case, precede and cause all bodily actions and conditions. It is not only mental action which originates bodily action in the first place, but it is mental action which afterward increases or intensifies the bodily action; and it is through the mind's recognition of bodily conditions, and not otherwise that the bodily actions become the occasion for further bodily changes.

As has already been said, the mind may originate thought within itself independent of any suggestion from an external source, and it is therefore correct to say that we often "feel" pure thought; that is, we recognize the changed physical conditions following that thinking which had no cause outside of the mind. This is necessarily the case because, as Professor James says,

This mental consciousness of the new bodily conditions which have been caused by thinking constitutes what we call "feeling"; and a person speaks as accurately when he says, "I feel sad because of the loss of a friend," as when he says, "I feel hurt because of a blow." In both cases the words are used to designate the mental consciousness of certain new physical conditions, and include in their meaning both the conditions and the consciousness of the changes. In one case it is thinking that has changed the bodily conditions; in the other it is thinking also, but we attribute the change to the blow.

"All mental states are followed by bodily activity of some sort." That it was thinking, even though unnoticed, which caused the feeling and its peculiarities is shown by the fact that, if thoughts consciously in the mind are changed, the feelings will change with the change of thought. It is thinking alone which originates feeling and afterwards becomes aware of it. The mind even notes its own action as well as the actions of the various portions of the body and of external things; and each of these three may cause further action in the mind, to be followed by other and consequent action in the body.

The originating mental action, the first in the series, being almost or quite instantaneous, is often entirely unnoticed by the thinker; but this failure to perceive it does not change the fact of its existence, nor prevent its legitimate result from taking place in the body. Because we are not always aware of the initial or originating action of the mind, and because of the consequent undue prominence which, for this reason, is usually given to those physical conditions which constitute the second action in the series, the erroneous opinion is entertained that physical action is sometimes an originating cause.

It is true that bodily conditions affect mental actions when the mind takes note of them, just the same as when the mind takes note of any action or condition external to the body; but we must not lose sight of the fact that if the mind does not take note of those bodily conditions, no further bodily changes will take place; besides, in every case the bodily condition, whether noted by the mind or not, is itself the result of some mental action which preceded it.

This order of occurrence may be illustrated by the case of the man and the bear. (1) The man has, stored in his mind, certain ideas regarding the dangerous character of bears. (2) When he sees a wild bear in the woods, these ideas recur and thoughts of danger (fear) dominate, if they do not obliterate, all other thinking. (3) As a consequence of this course of thinking, and probably without being conscious at the time of any mental action whatever, he decides instantly that the proper thing is to remove himself from the presence of the bear as soon as possible; (4) and therefore he runs. The running is a physical action resulting from the preceding and somewhat complicated mental actions. If he had not had those previous thoughts about the character of bears, or if he had not become aware of the presence of the bear (and this is a mental action), he would not have run. That thinking which caused fear was a necessary precedent to the running.

(5) As he runs, his mind notes the new bodily conditions attendant upon his running, and these, being discordant, increase the discordant thinking already in his mind. Although his running began because of his fear-thought, yet his running increases his fear and he is more scared because he runs. (6) The new mental condition of fright occasioned by his mental perception of the physical action of running is added to the fear he had before, and a panic follows. (7) But when he perceives that he has put such a distance between himself and the bear that he is safe (here also is mental action resulting in the mental conclusion) this thought of safety takes the place of his former thoughts, (8) and he stops running.

Or the condition might be worse; on becoming conscious of the nearness of the bear, and remembering the bad things he has believed about bears, his mental condition may be so intense as to induce paralysis and make it impossible for him to move. The intensity of his fear, increased by his recognition of his inability to move, may cause all physical action to cease.

The man is thus frightened to death. Thinking killed him.

Looking at the subject from the purely physical point of view, the physiologist tells us there are two kinds of nerve fibers, connected at their inner ends by ganglia, each kind having entirely different duties. Professor James sets this forth very definitely and clearly in his *Introduction to Psychology*, page 7, where he says: "Anatomically, therefore, the nervous system falls into three main divisions, comprising—" (1) the fibers which carry the currents in; "(2) the organs of central redirection of them; and " (3) the fibers which carry them out. " Functionally, we have sensation, central reflection, and motion, to correspond to these anatomical divisions."

The fibers which are included in Professor James's first division are those which bring to our consciousness the news from the outside world, as the prick of a pin, the feeling of the object on which the hand rests, the sound of the locomotive whistle, the sight of an animal, or any one of the numberless external things of which our senses tell us. The second division, or "organs of central redirection," i.e. the brain and ganglia, of nerve centers, receive the news from without and change what might otherwise be mere unintelligent mechanical action into actions that can only be explained by the intervention of intelligence giving its orders for the various activities which are to take place. Every ganglion is an organ where mind comes in contact with materiality to control it or to be influenced by it, according to the mental discipline which the mind has received. This is the point where the mental appears to touch the material to control it. Lastly, the fibers of the third division carry the orders to those organs which are to act and, in compliance with mental direction, set up in them the requisite activity.

Professor Ladd, of Yale, in the following technical language, describes very accurately these actions and offices of the nerves in producing our awareness of external things and our succeeding physical actions: - "To know that the mechanical or chemical action of stimuli on the end organs of sense starts a mysterious molecular commotion in the axis-cylinders of the centripetal nerves, and that this commotion propagates itself, as a process of an uncertain character, to the central nervous mass, and there, as a process yet more mysterious, lays the physical basis for a special forth-putting of the life of conscious sensation; ... to know these things, and the grounds on which they rest, is to be scientific as respects physiological and psycho-physical questions of the most important kind."

### **INFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL INCIDENTS**

#### **CHAPTER 8**

Thinking is the initial act of all human actions, but external incidents in many cases precede thinking and provoke it. Whenever the external suggestive incident is taken into consideration, the order of occurrence is as follows: -

First. The external incident presents itself.

Second. This is followed by thinking of some kind.

Third. Some bodily action takes place which is the result of that thinking.

Fourth. Then occur the events which follow in their natural order.

We see the incident, we think about it, we act; and then follow the events consequent on that action. The factor governing our action and deciding its character is the thinking and not the occurrence. It is an error to believe that the incident is the governing power. We fall into this error because we fail to note the part played by thinking.

Suppose a frightened horse has escaped from his driver and is running toward a little child at play in the street. Several persons see the impending accident. One of these, with vivid imagination, but not directing his mental actions at all, pictures to himself all the horrors that may happen and is paralyzed by fear. Another thinks only of himself and his own peril and stands still or removes himself beyond all possible danger. Yet another throws his arms about, gesticulating wildly, perhaps screams. All he does arises from his own mental distraction and adds to the confusion and consternation already in progress. Had another of those present been so absorbed in other affairs that he did not see the runaway horse, he would not have been disturbed by it, nor would he have taken any action in relation to it. Another, seeing exactly the same that the others see, is actuated by an entirely different line of thinking. "Quick as thought," he estimates the distance and speed of the horse, his own possible speed and his distance from the child, decides there is a chance for successful action, springs to the rescue, and snatches the child from danger.

In the illustration we have (1) the external suggestive incident of the runaway horse, (2) the thinking of each person, and (3) his consequent bodily action.

Although the action in each case was connected with the same incident, yet it took its essential character from the thinking and not from the incident. This is without exception. Between the incident or suggestion and the action is always thinking. Without this thinking there could not be any action. Neither the incident nor any suggestion decides what the action shall be. The thinking does that. This is true of all bodily actions whether great or small, important or trivial, observed or unobserved.

In the case under consideration the actions of the persons who were present varied because their thinking varied; the initial difference was in their thinking. Each saw the same thing that the others saw, and if the incident had been the governing and directing power, each would have done the same things that the others did. Had a multitude been present, there would have been as many kinds of action as there were kinds of thinking.

Let two persons, walking in a pasture, come unexpectedly upon a group of cattle feeding. One of these persons has followed a course of thinking which has made him a lover of animals, and he is pleased, interested, and views them with delighted attention. The thinking of the other has been habitually turned in the opposite direction. His thoughts about them have been those of fear, and now these recur to his mind, and he is filled with alarm. The actions of the two persons are as different as their thinking. One approaches the cattle with pleasure; the other flies from them in terror. He does not understand that his sense of danger is all because of his own thinking, but believes it is because of the cattle. If the cattle had been the real cause, the other person would have been as fearful as he was. In the same way we attribute the cause of our own faults to others when it is really within ourselves.

An extreme illustration, but one which has occurred in actual life and which shows the extent to which the power of thought has been carried, is furnished by the inhabitants of India. The man-eating tiger is an object of the greatest terror to the majority of them, and they go to his jungle only in large numbers and with every kind of weapon at their command. On the other hand, the man, whose thinking relative to the tiger is of a contrary sort, goes into the jungle alone without any weapons and stays there unharmed. If those men who so fear the tiger would practice this man's course of thinking, they, too, would be in the same condition as he is and would be able to do the things which he does. A change of men's thinking would revolutionize the attitude of the race toward animals, and of animals toward the race.

Herein is the reason why some people do with impunity what would be impossible for others to do, or what they would be greatly injured by doing. The difference is popularly attributed to temperament, physical conditions, constitutional characteristics, or some other personal peculiarity. It is really due to states of mind—to thinking - the thinking which each habitually does whether noticed or unnoticed; this is often the result of education or habit, and the right habit can be created by continuous right thinking.

It does not need any further discussion to show that our feelings and emotions are not caused, as we ordinarily think, by something external to ourselves; they are caused by our own mental condition. If our thinking had been different, all our succeeding actions would have been different also. This has been recognized by the wise ones here and there all down the stream of time. Shakespeare says:-

" The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves, that we are underlings."

—not in things outside of us, whether near or remote, but in our own thinking, therefore in ourselves. More than seven hundred years ago good old St. Bernard said: "Nothing can work me damage except myself; the harm that I sustain I carry about with me and am a real sufferer but by my own fault." In the principles here set forth are both the confirmation and the explanation of his statement. The fault is solely in the thinking. We may change our thinking and thus change both our course and our conditions.

The cause of danger from our emotions lies within ourselves; it is useless to try to run away from it because we carry it with us as we run. The recluse carries within his own mind the cause of his difficulties, and this is why monasticism has always been a failure and always will be. It is not the temptation but the man's own thought in connection with it that ruins him. In every instance it is not the external incident but the man's own thinking which directs, controls, and decides what his course shall be.

## THE RULE

### **CHAPTER 9**

For the purposes of further discussion all thinking may be divided into two classes, harmonious and discordant.

"Each brings forth after its kind." This is the substance of a declaration contained in one of the oldest writings in the world, and is only another form for the philosophic proposition that the cause always exists in its consequence, which is exemplified as a fact wherever life and action have been observed. Then the character of the cause must determine the character of its consequence, and consequences must correspond to causes. Since thinking is the initial of all human action and is causative in its character, therefore right or harmonious thinking must produce right or harmonious conditions, and erroneous, evil, or discordant thinking must produce erroneous, evil, or discordant conditions. Consequently, control of the thinking is of the very first importance because it is control of causes, and control of causes is control of the consequences which are to result from those causes.

The farmer plants corn, and corn springs up and grows. The young of animals are of their own kind. Even in the doctrine of evolution, which might seem to furnish something different if not contrary, the same principle prevails, for evolutionists tell us that activity produces changes and conditions corresponding to its own character. Exercise of strength in the arm produces more strength in the arm; exercise of skill in the fingers results in more skill in the fingers, and so on through the whole list. Mental training produces mental ability of the same kind as the training. Inactivity results in atrophy, while a new form of activity is held not only to develop increased activity of the organ used but even a new organ.

This principle has long been recognized in a limited way, as seen in the old adage, "Laugh and grow fat," and in Shakespeare's "lean and hungry Cassius." With the same import he says: -

" To mourn a mischief that is past and gone is the next way to draw new mischief on;"

But the conditions are even more positive, direct, and immediate than these statements indicate. In a very general way it is recognized that grief, fear, and anger shorten life, and that sometimes, when extreme in their intensity, they kill instantly; while contentment, peace, and satisfaction produce beneficial effects and tend directly and strongly to prolong life. Anxiety, doubt, and despair paralyze. Bitterness, greed, lust, jealousy, envy, and the like cause men to commit all kinds of wrongful and criminal acts, including even murder itself.

Such thoughts stamp their baleful impress on former and feature, and when habitual or constant they leave their permanent disfigurement. "Even a momentary thought of anger, anxiety, avarice, lust, fear, or hate distorts the features, impairs respiration, retards or quickens the circulation of the blood, and alters its chemical composition." These results, the same in kind as the thinking that produces them, are too widely known and appreciated to need elaboration or comment. Good produces good; evil produces evil; and this always, without exception.

It is unfortunate that, until recently, the larger tendency has been to study the evil thoughts and their results more than the good ones; but the general proposition will not be disputed that good thoughts produce results the opposite of those produced by the evil thoughts. "Love worketh no ill," is a truism in the negative form that no one is disposed to dispute, whatever one might be inclined to say of the same proposition in the affirmative form: "Love worketh only good." Similar things may be said of all good or harmonious thoughts.

It is true that sometimes a result which is not good appears to have been caused by good thoughts. Especially is it so with good intentions. In all such cases, if the causes are accurately analyzed, it will be found that the evil came from some unobserved ill which was connected with the good. Thus, ignorance often results in erroneous judgment concerning the character of the object sought or the means employed.

As to the effects of erroneous thought on the body, we have the authoritative utterances of acknowledged scientific observers. President Hall says: "The hair and beard grow slower, it has been proved by experiment, when a business man has been subjected to several months of anxiety. To be happy is essential. To be alive, and well, and contented is the end of life, the highest science and the purest religion."

Professor Gates made some very interesting experiments in this direction. He provided a spring regulated to maintain an even degree of resistance, and so arranged as to register the number of times it had been pressed down. A man was required to make depressions of this spring with his finger until, from exhaustion, the finger refused to act. This was repeated until Gates was able to determine the average number of depressions which the man could make under ordinary circumstances before exhaustion occurred. Then, at different times afterward, he was asked to think about some subject which would cause discordant thoughts, such as the saddest thing that ever happened to him, or the man he most hated,

and on one occasion he was asked to read Dickens's story of the death of Little Nell. After much thinking on such a topic, so that his mind was filled with the thoughts which it suggested, he was required to depress the spring.

The average number of depressions possible under such mental conditions was very much less than he had previously made when his mind was in its usual condition. On the contrary, harmonious thoughts, as of love, peace, or anything good, raised the number of depressions above the average in a similar large proportion. A great number of experiments persistently showed similar results. All this seems very wonderful because of the manner in which it is presented, but it is of the same character as indicated by the ordinary experience and observation of every one. There are multitudes of similar incidents in everyday life. Who has not noticed that far less physical or mental weariness or exhaustion follows an evening thoroughly enjoyed, no matter how hard at work one may be, than follows the same length of time if engaged in some enforced or disagreeable occupation? In one case the thinking is harmonious, and in the other it is discordant.

In direct connection with this idea Professor James says: "I suspect that neither the nature nor the amount of our work is accountable for the frequency and severity of our break-downs, but that their cause lies rather in those absurd feelings of hurry and having no time, in that breathlessness and tension, that anxiety of feature and that solicitude for results, that lack of inner harmony and ease, in short, by which with us the work is so apt to be accomplished." The break-down does not come so much from the work as from the discordant thoughts attending it. Uncertainty, anxiety, worry, fear, break a man down, but he can endure an enormous amount of labor if, listed of these thoughts, his mind is filled with calmness, assurance, courage, and confidence.

By an examination of its effects upon the system Professor Gates undertook to discover the character of those substances which he obtained by condensation of the breath of his subjects. The brownish precipitate from the breath of angry persons when administered to either men or animals caused stimulation and excitement of the nerves. Another substance produced by another kind of discordant thinking, when injected into the veins of a guinea-pig or a hen, killed it outright.

He gives his conclusions on this point with definiteness and precision: "Every emotion of a false and disagreeable nature produces a poison in the blood and cell tissues." He sums up his results in the statement: "My experiments show that irascible, malevolent, and depressing emotions generate in the system injurious compounds, some of which are extremely poisonous; also that agreeable, happy emotions generate chemical compounds of nutritious value, which stimulate the cells to manufacture energy."

Only one specific case from ordinary life will be cited. It is chosen from a host of others because it is extreme as well as typical, and because its authenticity cannot be questioned. Many similar incidents are recorded in medical books.

The mother was strong, healthy, vigorous, muscularly well developed, and not especially sensitive, nor nervously organized, but rather the contrary. Her young babe was in perfect health.

Something occurred which threw the mother into a fit of violent anger. Shortly afterward her infant was hungry, and she gave it her breast. The little one was soon after attacked with spasms and died in convulsions within a few hours. It is acknowledged by the highest authority that this was the direct result of the mother's anger. It does not need Professor Gates's experiments to show that she had poisoned her child. The mental state of anger produced an active poison which found its way to the mother's milk and killed the babe. Incidents of a similar kind pointing to the same conclusion, though differing in degree as the mental states varied, have long been matters of observation by medical authorities.

At the Vermont State Agricultural Experimental Farm, similar conditions are shown to prevail among animals. The milk of a certain cow showed four hundred and eighty points with little variation for several successive days. The cow's udder was scratched with a pin, at which she was irritated and more or less frightened. In all other ways she was treated as nearly as possible just as she

If discordant thoughts bring about such discordant results, harmonious thoughts must produce harmonious results of corresponding intensity. Instances will be found in profusion if sought for. The only difficulty

attending the search arises from the fact that people are usually trained to conceal their emotions by restraint of the outward expression.

All this is not so very new as it may at first appear. We read in The Wisdom of Solomon: "By what things a man sinneth, by these he is punished," showing that at least a fragment of this thought was recognized by one of the old sages three thousand years ago. Not far from the same time, perhaps earlier, —the dates are uncertain, —one of the wise old Buddhists of India said: "All that we are is the result of what we have thought; it is founded on our thoughts; it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him as the wheel follows the foot of him who draws the cart."

Although this is very strong language, yet it is so reasonable that it should not create surprise. That had been on the preceding days. At the next milking her milk showed only four hundred points, a falling off of over seventeen per cent. Men should be kind to the animals under their care for economical reasons, if for no others; but what about the healthful quality of milk produced under disturbing conditions? The consequence partakes of the nature of its cause is a principle appearing in all experience. In each case the physical conditions are of the same kind as the mental states which caused them. Discordant thinking debilitates and poisons the system; harmonious thinking strengthens and nourishes it.

On the moral plane the situation is even more obvious because that deals with actions which were intended. A man may be angry with his neighbor and hate him. This is a mental condition; or, as McCosh would say, an emotion caused by a mental act. Its result is apparent to every observer in his treatment of the neighbor. His mental attitude toward another person may be just the reverse of this, and it results in another and a distinctly different kind of conduct.

The mental condition of a person may make him covet strongly the property of some one else, and his judgment (which is the result of mental action) being unbalanced, he steals; while another man, with well-balanced judgment, and therefore thinking another kind of thoughts, obtains the article he desires by honest means. These contrary courses of action can only result from two kinds of thinking; and they are just as apparent in the highest actions in the moral scale as in the lowest

After all has been said that can be, the whole may be summed up very briefly. Although they may follow one another very rapidly, yet two thoughts of opposite character cannot occupy the mind at the same time. Each kind of thinking produces results of exactly its own character. If one kind is excluded, the other will present itself. If a person would avoid discordant, physical, mental, or moral conditions, let him empty his mind of all discordant thoughts which create such conditions, fill it with harmonious ones, and cultivate them. Thinking is causative; if the discordant cause is excluded from the mind, its evil



consequences will not be produced. The rule for conduct necessitated by these propositions is most obvious and simple: -

### **Cease thinking discordant thoughts.**

This rule is an expression of the principle of renunciation, a principle as old as the race; but it strikes at the root of all human actions instead of dealing with the topmost branches and leaves, as rules generally do; and it also avoids all possible interference of one person with another. Renunciation of evil, as expressed in numberless forms of "Thou shalt not," has been taught in one way or another from the earliest times. The method of avoidance has always held a prominent place in ethical and moral teaching. The two contrary aphorisms, "Avoid the wrong" and "Do the right," are bound together by a principle too strong to be broken. Either includes the other, so that at last the two are only one, both in theory and in practice. The morality of avoidance of wrong and practice of right is so axiomatic that it instantly forces itself upon the conscience of every one who would become better himself, or who would aid others to become better. Compliance with this rule, which goes down into the depths of man's nature and deals with the primal causes of all human actions, will easily and thoroughly accomplish all desirable results.

## **DISCORDANT THOUGHTS**

### ***CHAPTER 10***

The rule set forth in the last chapter is vital, for it strikes at the very root of all evil. How then may its requirements be complied with? The first step toward this object is to decide what thoughts are discordant. The wonderful subtlety of these thoughts often hides their true character so that many persons who entertain them are not aware of their real nature.

Some pay so little attention to the subject that discord continually rules their minds. Besides, large classes of thoughts which are discordant are popularly held to be admirable and therefore are carefully cultivated, and those who do not harbor them are censured. This does not change results. All such errors inevitably lead to greater confusion. The list of discordant thoughts is long, and if one sets about the work of their exclusion, he will be led into a recognition and understanding of their character and quality that will far surpass any verbal explanation which it is possible to make; yet definitions are of advantage, especially in the beginning.

Of course anger, hate, greed, lust, envy, jealousy, and all malevolent thoughts are at once recognized as discordant. To these must be added grief and its attendants, regret and disappointment; fear, doubt, and uncertainty, with their sense of responsibility, anxiety, worry, and despair; and condemnation of all kinds, including self-condemnation, with its self-consciousness, self-abasement, shame, and remorse.

All sinful or erroneous thoughts are discordant in their nature, and all discordant thoughts are erroneous, though, in the correct meaning of the word, not all discordant thoughts are sinful.

One error seriously influencing our decisions regarding the character of our thinking arises from the fact that, by many, a lesser degree of discordant thinking is held to be different in character from its more extreme manifestation. The character of a mental condition does not change with any change in its intensity. An act remains the same in its character and in the character of its consequences regardless of ignorance, misunderstanding, or any erroneous opinion about it or connected with it.

Thinking which is held to be reprehensible if intense has the same character in its milder forms and also when mingled with thinking of another kind, even though we deceive ourselves into the opinion that it is praise-worthy in the lesser degree or when in combination with other thinking.

We might as well say that if a weight does not reach a given amount, it is something else besides weight, or that it does not have any effect, as to say that the milder degree of discordant thinking has changed it to something other than what it was when more intense, and, therefore, that it does no harm. A ton is a ton, and a pound is a pound, and both are the same in kind; each acts in the same way in its due proportion. If fifty pounds would break down a support, twenty-five would seriously weaken it, and ten or even one would proportionately reduce its power of resistance.

Mental conditions are just as uniform in their character and action. Anger of any degree, or in any of its forms, is always anger however much it may be lauded, and even when provoked by something which may be thought to make it justifiable. In exact proportion to its intensity it always brings evil to the one who indulges in it. One thought never becomes united with another thought to their metamorphosis as hydrogen and oxygen disappear into water in their chemical union. Thoughts do not have any such relation to each other.

Everyone is aware that extreme emotion sometimes kills, that when it is indulged in to excess, it incapacitates for any kind of effort, while in lesser degree it may pass by without notice. If extreme mental states produce disastrous results, milder conditions must, in their proportion, produce milder results of similar character. Though the disadvantage may be small, still it works its proportion of harm, and the energy expended in overcoming its injurious effects might have been stored up for future use or employed in productive activities.

The mental condition of doubt is seldom recognized as discordant, but is often held to be commendable or at least excusable, as well as unavoidable. While it has phases that are only mildly discordant, yet its uncertainty leads unavoidably to indecision of action; and, when this is coupled with that sense of responsibility which arises out of the anticipation of possible unfavorable consequences, there follows much discordant thinking in the form of anxiety and worry. These are products of doubt and would not appear except for its presence in the mind. The two, doubt and responsibility, are the parents of anxiety, fret, worry, and a large group of other discordant mental conditions. Whenever discord appears, the cause which produced it must be discordant.

Anxiety, though often considered justifiable, necessary, or even advantageous, and therefore commendable, is a discordant mental condition. In its milder forms, at least, it is seldom held to be objectionable; but when the weight of responsibility rests heavily and anxiety appears in its intensity, its true character is clearly manifested in mental conditions that are unequivocal in their inharmonious peculiarities.

Anxiety in its extreme manifestation puts an effectual stop to all progress. When under a keen realization of responsibility, who has not hesitated to undertake a good deed, or, having undertaken it, has not been greatly hindered by the anxiety which attended its execution? These and all their train spring from doubt and fear, and find their legitimate result in worry and its disasters, culminating in moral cowardice and despair.

Many people are prevented from doing what they know to be wise because they fear the result, and often because they are afraid that they will fear in the course of the transaction or at the approach of its crisis. There may not be anything but their own fear to be afraid of; yet they are aware that fear incapacitates, and the fear that they will fear prevents any action. "I can't,

because I know I shall be afraid," is a frequent expression of a controlling thought, and they who indulge it stand paralyzed by the fear of their own fear; but this which they have themselves created they may themselves destroy.

One of the worst errors concerning fear is found in the thought, old as historic man, that under certain circumstances it is wise to fear. It is easily understood how the old writer, who thought God was a tyrant ruling in anger and desiring vengeance, could readily believe that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." No doubt that writer really meant what we mean when we use the same word; but he was woefully wrong in his conception of God's character. His declaration and the ideas which caused it were widely prevalent not so very long ago, and have aided immensely in leading hosts of mankind into false opinions and their consequent erroneous actions.

There is a similar error in all those forms and actions of government which rest on fear for their motive and efficiency. It is not possible for any one, either child or man, to do his best nor to be his best when under the dominion of fear; and yet not only parents, but both Church and State, have held that fear is salutary and have acted on that proposition. Untold millions of lives have been dwarfed and perverted, and laudable plans without number have been thwarted or abandoned because of needless fear.

Hurry needs no definition. It arises from the recognition that a certain object must be accomplished, or a certain amount of work must be done, in a given time. If the time is sufficient, there is no feeling of haste. If the time seems insufficient, there follows a recognition of the necessity for haste, and the result is hurry. This grows out of the doubt which creates the fear that the work may not be accomplished in the required time. Hence, it is clear that the root of hurry is doubt or fear. The verbal expression of the idea takes some form of the declaration: "I am afraid I cannot finish in time," which is the natural language of haste and reveals its discordant character. Its essential exists in the thoughts which constitute its root, and which result in the peculiar sensations which always accompany it.

Abandonment of hurry does not involve the loss of anything desirable; instead it results in important advantages. Every one recognizes the truth of the old saw: "The more haste, the less speed." The mental condition which is produced by the feeling of hurry is always an impediment to celerity of action, often causes inaccuracy, and sometimes results in destruction. In and of itself alone, therefore, hurry, like all other kinds of discordant thinking, is a disadvantage in just the degree of its indulgence. Then abandon that mental condition and use the effort thus saved to increase efficiency. Grief in many of its forms is thought to be admirable. Especially is this the case if it is caused by the death of friends. It is then looked upon as an expression of kindness of heart and as a token of respect and love for the one who has gone.

These qualities are indeed admirable, but they are entirely distinct from grief, although grief has been mistakenly praised for them, solely because its close association with them has led to confusion of judgment. Not to grieve for the loss of friends is condemned as hardness of heart; sorrow for wrong doing is held to be right and laudable; yet we know that extreme grief often paralyzes and sometimes kills, and that not infrequently sorrow for wrong actions is so intense and absorbing as to unfit its victim for activity in any right direction.

Who does not know among his acquaintances those who have so grieved over business losses that they were unable to procure the needed support for the ones dependent upon them? Who has not known grief for the loss of a child to render the parent, for a time at least, incapable of discharging the ordinary duties of life? Many cases of grief have resulted in insanity. It is true that these are results of excessive grief; but all grief has the same characteristics, and such extreme instances only emphasize its injurious character. Gates shows by his experiments that even mild grief unfits for vigorous activities, a fact often noted by every observer.

To praise the milder forms of grief and condemn its excessive indulgence, or to praise it when it is self-contradictory. If the extreme degrees are injurious, the lesser ones are proportionately so. If one is to be avoided, so should the others be. Grief or regret, by itself alone, is never an advantage. It never rights a wrong, nor removes an obstacle, nor heals a wound. Shakespeare was correct when he wrote: "None can cure their harms by wailing them." Wailing only adds to them and makes them worse.

All selfishness is not only discordant in its character, but it is morally wrong; and, though the statement may seem harsh, yet, when accurately analyzed, grief in every one of its forms and degrees, even grief because of the loss of friends by death, is largely if not wholly selfish. If questioned, the mourner will himself admit that it is not the change which has come to the beloved one which causes his sorrow. It is his own loss which lies at the foundation of his grief; and that is selfishness.

If there is any truth in the declarations of Christian religion, every shade of grief for those who have gone before is in direct contradiction to professions of love for the departed. If Christians half believed what they say they do, they would recognize that in death there is not the slightest occasion for grief, but rather for rejoicing because of the change which has come to the one who has gone.

Despair in its extreme manifestation is at once recognized as discordant; its milder forms are also discordant though they may come to the surface under many and praiseworthy names. Even much-lauded patience may be only that form of despair in which one submits to the inevitable. So also is resignation; and often Christian resignation, so-called, is only despairing acquiescence in what are wrongly thought to be decrees of Divine Providence.

There is a variety of despair, often indulged in by many, which is not ordinarily classed as discordant, but which is, nevertheless, extremely dangerous. It finds utterance in the declaration, "I can't." This is an expression of complete hopelessness and voices a discordant thought that will paralyze the strongest; will destroy the best, wisest, and most fixed intentions; will put an end to the best-laid plans, and will terminate the most energetic actions. It injures everywhere and will bring disaster to anything it touches.

The thought, "I can't," makes the difference between success and failure. The dull boy in school is the one who, without making an effort, thinks and says "I can't." The bright boy is the one who thinks and says "I can." In the beginning there may have been very little other difference, only one gave up easily and the other not at all; the life of one becomes a failure, of the other a brilliant success.

The only place where "I can't" has any value is when used as a refusal to think or do wrong; even then it is erroneous in form and does not express the appropriate idea. The correct and more vigorous form under such circumstances would be, "I will not"; for a person may be abundantly able to do what he positively refuses to do.

"I can't" tends toward the cessation of all action—that is death. "I can" tends toward activity and gives power - that is life. Since we would avoid the worst of evils, we should cease even to think "I can't." If we would maintain life, we should continue to think "I can." The man who never recognizes defeat finally succeeds. It was said that the great secret of General Grant's success was that he never acknowledged, even to himself, that he was beaten. The man who thinks he has failed soon does

so, and he who thinks he is a failure speedily becomes one.

A man was bedridden. His physician said that he had no disease, and that there was no reason why he should not go about his business. The physician was correct; the man was a victim of his own thought. One day smoke came pouring into his room. It was only a ruse of his doctor, but the man thought the house was on fire. Thinking so, to him it was a reality. He forgot his in-ability; the "I can't" thought was excluded from his mind by another which for the moment was more intense, and, in consequence, he got up, dressed, and rushed out. "I can't," and not anything else, had held him in bondage.

Banish even the suspicion of the discordant and destructive thoughts of hopelessness, defeat, or despair. Do that everywhere, especially in the prosecution of the mental training here advocated. Whatever the object, let its consideration be always without a thought of discouragement, even when, examining its difficulties most carefully. Scrutinize all obstacles for the purpose of finding how to over-come them. If the project is worth the effort, there is a way to accomplish it. That way will be found if it is sought with a confidence which excludes all doubt.

Patience is highly lauded and not unduly so when contrasted with impatience; but the two are closely related. If its own special characteristics are examined, patience will be seen to occupy a paradoxical position. When one excludes all of that discordant thinking which is called impatience, he will not have any occasion for the exercise of patience; that is, when impatience is wholly put out of mind, patience also disappears. Therein is its subtlety and deceit, for patience has no possibility of existence without some of those discordant thoughts which attend impatience; and in the cultivation of patience one unsuspectingly allows and cultivates more or less impatience at the very time when he flatters himself that he has abandoned it.

Hence, there is something better than patience, and that is the condition which exists in the mind after the entire exclusion of all impatience. Until this can be attained patience is desirable just as a lesser degree of evil is not so bad as a greater. Patience may be a good intermediate stage in one's progress, but it is unwise to "cultivate patience" as a final virtue because it is only harboring a mild degree of error, which sometimes verges close on despair.

Self-condemnation, with its allied lines of thinking, has been highly commended as a proper recognition of one's own faults and mistakes. It is continually taught both by precept and example from infancy to old age. The little child is asked if he is not ashamed of himself for an act which he did not know was wrong; the man of business, teaches the inexperienced boy to blame himself for the mistakes of ignorance; the moralist says one ought to condemn himself for his wrong doing; the Church universally advises sorrow and regret for sins, and the deeper the penitence, or the greater the condemnation of self, the more laudable it is thought to be; and so on through the whole list of ethical and moral teachers of every grade.

Self-condemnation is a woeful waste of energy which should be directed toward repair of the injury done and avoidance of similar conditions in the future. This does not in the slightest degree imply less sensitiveness of conscience, less keenness of judgment, nor less clearness of sight to perceive the right and the wrong of things, nor less eagerness to do the right and avoid the wrong; on the contrary, its absence gives place for more of these very qualities and saves waste of vigor in both intellect and muscle.

Self-condemnation at its best is discordant; and the various forms of regret, grief over failures, self-distrust which produces doubt and hesitation about proposed or future actions, fear of not succeeding, inefficiency, and repression, are among the many serious and widespread evils resulting from it. Whatever their cause, they right no wrongs, repair no errors, set no bones, restore no life, change no act that is past, and do no good in any way. Their whole progeny is unworthy of any brave, true man.

The energy thus employed is worse than wasted because it is used in work that is destructive, occupying valuable time and absorbing valuable strength which might otherwise be used in repairing damages and recovering lost ground. A man need neither repeat his sins, his mistakes, nor his failures, nor need he condemn himself for them.

If self-condemnation prevails in any considerable degree, there will result such lack of confidence in one's own ability as to thrust him out of his proper sphere of activity into a lower one and to deprive him of efficiency and executive ability everywhere else as well as in this work of securing mental control. Such thoughts tend in every way to the degradation and even to the complete destruction of the thinker. Innumerable untimely graves are filled with victims of self-blame and its products, —disgrace, shame, remorse, and despair, —and yet self- condemnation has been held up as worthy of all praise by educated, intelligent, and moral people who would have known better if they had understood its true character.

That the boy does not "cry over spilled milk" does not indicate indifference to the loss of the milk; crying would only hinder him in his efforts to procure more. That a person does not waste time in vain condemnation of himself and his past actions, which were probably performed in good faith and with the best judgment possible on the information possessed at the time they were begun, does not indicate lack of understanding, nor want of discrimination, nor a disposition to repeat the error. That one does not sit in sackcloth and ashes for the crime or sin he has committed is no proof that his determination to abandon his evil course is not sincere.

Our great teacher, Jesus, the Christ, does not advise discordant thinking of any kind. He points out errors, wrongs, and sins, and holds them up to view in their true light, never in the slightest abating their enormity. He tells us not to repeat such things; but, so far as we have the record, he does not any-where nor under any circumstances advise any one to condemn himself or to regret anything he has done, or to grieve over it. He speaks of repentance and conversion, and in religious circles much stress is rightfully laid upon these; but, unfortunately, these English words as at present understood do not correctly represent the meaning of the Greek words for which they stand in the New Testament.

The Greek word *metanoeo*, which is translated "repent," is thus defined by the lexicographers: "to perceive afterwards, to change one's mind or pur-pose, to change one's opinion, to have another mind." This does not in the least indicate or require regret, self-condemnation, or any other discordant thinking. Jesus' exhortation was always to change the mind for the better, never to spend time wailing over the past, and it is entirely presumable that the connection of discordant thinking with the true meaning of the word arose from the fact that very often such a "change of mind" has been accompanied by thoughts of grief, regret, and self-condemnation; but the word itself does not convey such a meaning, any more than do the phrases which are used to define it. When the word was addressed to one who was in the wrong, it set forth in strictly scientific terms the easiest, simplest, and best method of making a change in conduct from wrong to right, for it simply means "change your mind" —no more, no less.

Likewise the Greek word *epistrepho*, which is translated "convert," contains within itself no meaning indicating any discordant thinking whatever. It is defined "to turn, to turn one's self, to turn about, to turn around," etc., and is used figuratively, as we say, "turn from the error of your ways"; or as Peter said in his speech to the people which is reported in Acts iii. 19: "Repent

ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "Change your minds and thereby be turned about" exactly expresses the full meaning and brings the two words into such proximity that their mutual relationship clearly appears. This turning about is the natural and inevitable result of the change of mind indicated by the true meaning of the word "repent." Both repentance and conversion will be better understood, and their object better accomplished, if the thought about them is limited to the rightful meaning of the words, and the judgment is not warped by self-condemnation, grief, fear, remorse, or any other discordant thinking.

## **HOW TO CONTROL THINKING**

### **CHAPTER 11**

Said an old Hindu sage who lived so long ago that his name has been forgotten: "Let the wise man without fail restrain his mind." His counsel would have been better if he had said: "Let the wise man without fail control his mind;" and perhaps that is what he meant, for his real meaning may have been lost in erroneous translation. Ever since his time, and probably for a long while before, there have been men who recognized with more or less distinctness and earnestness the advisability of mental control.

To be able to abandon those varieties of discordant and injurious thinking described in the preceding chapter would constitute a very desirable element of mental control and one which would lead directly to most admirable results through complete self-control. The question then becomes, how may we rid ourselves of discordant thinking?

The answer is very simple. Stop thinking discordant thoughts. Turn from one subject and give attention to another; change the thinking from one thing to another; drop out of the mind those discordant thoughts which occupy it and think other and harmonious thoughts.

Every one who observes his own mental actions and methods is aware of countless changes of thinking following one another in rapid succession in response to external suggestions or requirements. The frequency of these occurrences will surprise all those who have not turned their attention in this direction. They will also discover that, under all ordinary circumstances, these changes are made without the slightest appreciable effort. All this is normal, occurring in the usual course of mental action.

It is also ideal. It is toward such natural and ideal action as this that all intentional efforts to avoid discordant thinking should be directed. To make similar changes intentionally every time the discordant thoughts appear, thus dropping them out of the mind and giving the attention wholly to harmonious thoughts, is to comply with the rule in every particular and accomplish every desirable result.

The only unusual mental action involved in this course is that the impulse to the action is to come from within instead of from without. The change should be made purposely, promptly, because of one's own choice, and in response to recognized principle; but not in heedless compliance with the suggestions of external circumstances or conditions. If apprehension of either effort or difficulty arises in the mind when proposing to abandon discordant thinking, it should be instantly excluded because it will inevitably lead to some form of the very kind of thinking which is to be avoided. This course of training depends on choice, must be in response to choice, and should be accompanied by the least possible expenditure of will or effort.

So much is said about exercise of the will that the term has become enveloped in a cloud of words, its true meaning has become obscured to the ordinary mind, and its very existence is questioned by some of the best-trained intellects. However that may be, preceding what is usually recognized as the will, or the determination to do, is choice which is without conscious effort, while exercise of the will is always accompanied by effort, sometimes severe. It all finally resolves itself into a question of action in response to choice, because choice lies at the foundation of all these actions, however necessary exercise of will may sometimes seem to be.

The requirement is merely to drop the discordant thought—to let go of it as one lets go of a stone in the hand - and this surely necessitates less exertion than to hold on. This act of dropping the discordant thought ought to be, and may be, nothing more than the abandonment of effort in response to choice, and it should not require any exercise of energy in "enforcing the behest of the will," for there ought not to be any of the strenuousness of "will" about it.

Control of the thinking is one of the primary actions of the mind and, like all such actions, can no more be described than one can tell another how to see or how to move. It is possible to say, "Look there," or, "Hand me the book," but it is impossible to instruct another how to see with the eye or how to move the hand. The three mental actions which are essential to this mental training are how to think, how to stop thinking any particular thought which may be in the mind, and how to change the thinking from one thought to another. Although there cannot be any direct explanation of these primary actions, yet, through experience, every one knows somewhat of how to accomplish them and does not need any instruction beyond the suggestion to begin.

The method is most clearly and definitely set forth by Strong when he says: "Suppose that, while thinking, I come within sight of some painful memory or inconvenient thought, and turn deliberately away, saying, 'No, I must not think of that;' surely, by so doing I cause the cessation of the corresponding brain-event as effectually as if I went at the cortex with a knife. It is as easy to turn the attention away from an idea as to turn the eyes away from an object. Nay more, it is as easy to turn the attention away from a sensation. To make a visual sensation lapse from consciousness, it is not necessary to look away, but only to think away."

Apropos of this subject, Edward Carpenter says: "If a pebble in our boot torments us, we expel it. We take off the boot and shake it out. And once the matter is fairly understood it is just as easy to expel an intruding and obnoxious thought from the mind. About this there ought to be no mistake, no two opinions. The thing is obvious, clear, and unmistakable. It should be as easy to expel an obnoxious thought from your mind as it is to shake a stone out of your shoe; and till a man can do that, it is just nonsense to talk about his ascendancy over nature, and all the rest of it. He is a mere slave and a prey to the bat-winged phantoms that flit through the corridors of his own brain."

President McCosh says: "Though a man may not be able to command his sensibilities directly, he has complete power over them indirectly. He can guide and control, if not the feeling itself, at least the idea, which is the channel in which it flows.... He may be able to banish the unholy idea by calling in a more elevating one; he may remove the object out of the way or remove out of the way of the object, and the flame left without its feeder will die out. A man can thus control his feelings; he is responsible for them, for their perversion, for their excess, and defect."



He who is really in earnest and perseveres in the practice, doing his best to stop his discordant thinking in ways which his own intelligence and experience will suggest, will learn the whole lesson. There is no secret about it, nor any copyright, nor patent. By inheritance it is the right of every human being, and every one who is in earnest will find the way to claim his inheritance and control his thinking. In practical mechanics, however much the boy may have heard or read, he does not know much about his work until he uses the tools, and by using them learns certain things that cannot be verbally communicated; so here, in the practice of these things, one may learn for himself vastly more than can be told in words. The earnest practitioner in mental as well as in physical training will gain an understanding and a power which will enable him to do what seemed impossible at the outset.

## **SUBSTITUTION**

### **CHAPTER 12**

Purposely putting out one thought and occupying the mind with another may be called the method of substitution. Exclusion of discordant thoughts furnishes opportunity for harmonious ones to take their place. If the purpose is intense enough, the new thought will never have to be sought for, because ceasing to think one thought uncovers another which at once presents itself in the place of the one which was discarded.

Decisive action at this point in the process is especially important. On the instant and without hesitation, seize the first thought which appears and hold it tenaciously. When the dangerous intruder has been dislodged, the positive, unwavering acceptance of the new thought will close the door and lock it behind the ejected intruder. To occupy the mind in looking about for some specially appropriate thought will cause such indecision and vacillation as will give the one excluded abundant opportunity to return. Do not stop at first to question the character of the newcomer. That can be decided later when the mental control is more assured, and then if another more desirable thought presents itself, it may be accepted in its turn.

The mind must be active. The room which was once filled with erroneous and discordant thoughts, but which has been swept clean of them, must immediately be filled with desirable ones so that there may be no place for the return of the former objectionable occupants. "We should have our principles ready for use on every occasion" is as true now as when Epictetus first declared it. Good thoughts will then be ready to appear as soon as they are given the opportunity by the turning out of bad ones. Of course it is at all times and in every way advantageous intentionally and consciously to bring good thoughts into the mind and keep them there; then evil ones will not have an opportunity to enter.

In the prosecution of this mental training employment of any kind is a decided advantage because it keeps the mind occupied with a better kind of thinking than might otherwise fill it. Herein lies one of the greatest benefits connected with labor. The labor should not be such as results in great physical fatigue, nor should it require such special attention as to produce mental exhaustion. It should be neither excessive nor insufficient, but adapted mentally and physically to the condition of the person who is employed in it. If excessive, there is danger of mental reaction through fatigue; if insufficient, there is danger that the unoccupied mind may take up some objectionable topic. Mental activity and the character of that activity are the essentials; the labor is valuable only as an aid to control mental action.

Herein, also, lies the advantage connected with travel and change of scene. Under these circumstances nearly every one submits himself to the suggestions of his new surroundings and allows his mind to follow them without any effort at control. Removal from the old familiar environment into scenes of an entirely different character gives new suggestions which substitute new lines of thinking in place of the former habitual ones, and these changed mental conditions bring fresh stimulus to the physical system. It is change of thinking which causes the beneficial result, not change of air.

The idle and frivolous need the change that stimulates new thought more than those who are engaged in productive work, because their thinking is far more liable to be of an injurious character. This is the secret of the physical degeneration which follows Jives of luxury or idleness; the poison is in the character of their thinking.

Just at this place it may be well to note this self-evident fact: exclusion of discordant, erroneous, or immoral thinking gives just so much more time and opportunity for the harmonious, truthful, or moral thinking. From considerations of utility alone, this is very important; the questions of morality make it much more so.

A most excellent way to turn the thoughts from discordant channels into harmonious ones is to look habitually for the good, both in persons and in things. It is an accepted fact that nothing can exist which is wholly evil or entirely separated from good. There was never a person who did not have some good qualities or who did not do some good deeds; nor ever a thing, however much it might be out of place, that did not have somewhat of good in it or closely connected with it. Then the search for the good, if diligent and faithful, need never be in vain; and when found, it ought to be well and carefully treasured. With this habit fully established, error thoughts will seldom intrude. Steadfastly "Look for the good in thine enemy."

The fact that good and bad are often close together, and that there is never anything wholly bad, is well illustrated in the answer of the member of the kirk, who had been charged with saying good things of the devil - an unpardonable sin in the eyes of those valiant old Scotch Presbyterians of former days. Her answer and her defense was: " Ah weel, mon, 'twere vera gude for a' the members o' the kirk if they had his persistence."

The search for the good should be undertaken for its own sake alone, and not with any ulterior or secondary object in view. The one purpose should always be kept fully to the front. If this search for the good is prosecuted with the desire to secure through it some other advantage, that second object should be dropped out of the mind because its presence will tend strongly toward defeat. This is because the action of the mind will be divided by the pursuit of two objects and neither will receive its whole attention, consequently each will fall short of its rightful result. The hunter cannot aim his rifle at two different objects at the same time with any serious expectation of hitting either. To be double minded is to invite defeat.

The whole subject may be well illustrated by the case of the young lady who could not sleep because the noises of the city disturbed her. She was told that every noise, whatever its character, had a musical note and was advised to try to find that note in each of the various sounds which she heard.

In compliance with this advice she abandoned all attempts to go to sleep and pursued that one object with the result that she slept soundly all night. The explanation is that before she had dwelt strongly on the discordant characteristics of the noises which she heard, and, by her own thinking, had enlarged her consciousness of the discord as well as of her consequent sufferings, and thus she kept herself awake. In her search for the musical notes she lost sight of the disturbing discordant conditions, and she fell asleep because the discord no longer disturbed her.

If, during her search for the musical notes and her contemplation of them, she had kept in her mind the thought that she was

doing this for the purpose of inducing sleep, she would thus have kept herself wide awake because her mental action would have been divided between two objects, and she would have been constantly aware of the fear (discordant thought) that after all she might not secure the coveted sleep. Let the mind be single. If so much can be accomplished in the purely physical way by singleness of purpose in the search for the good, surely equally conclusive results may be gained in moral and spiritual directions; and by so much as these are more desirable will the consequences be more valuable.

Therefore this search for the good, which is one of the best methods by which harmonious thinking may be substituted for discordant, should not be limited to an attempt for the moment only. It should be a life work, constantly in exercise, and it should be pursued until complete success is at last attained in the exclusion of every discordant thought. Thus life will be made to shine brighter and brighter, not alone for the one who practices the lesson and learns it, but also for all his associates, until at last it shall irradiate the world. We do not, nor can we, live and make ourselves better for ourselves alone. This is a work for self which does not have any selfishness in it.

### **IMMEDIATE ACTION**

#### **CHAPTER 13**

The discordant thought often appears very suddenly in response to external suggestion, and sometimes that fact is made an excuse for allowing it to pursue its course. The plea is, "It came before I knew it;" but this does not justify any one in allowing it to continue. One can think in one direction just as rapidly as in another, and, if he chooses to do so, he can stop the discordant thought as suddenly as it appeared—even on the very instant. The unexpected flash of anger can be cast out of the mind with the same instantaneous-ness that it started.

There is no difference in the rapidity of the different kinds of thinking. It takes no longer to think harmonious thoughts than discordant ones, and no longer to exclude the discordant thought, than it did to admit it. If one is instantaneous, so may the other be. Though it takes a little time for the mind to send its orders along the nerve to the muscle, still, in itself alone thinking is very nearly if not quite instantaneous.

Of course, in all this there are those thoughts which immediately precede an act, and others which were antecedent and contributory to it. The series may be a long one, running far back into the past. Before a man murders another, there must have been in his own mind thoughts of greed, envy, anger, hate, desire for revenge, or others of evil character. According to some statements of modern science, these may have followed one another through generations of ancestors. The first one of the series is more easily controlled than any of its successors, and destruction of the first prevents the birth of any of the others. They are all evil and discordant, and, under the rule, each is to be abandoned as soon as it appears, even though none of them point to any immediate "overt act."

Indeed, the danger of the overt act does not constitute the greatest danger. That really lies in the first thought of the series. The woodsman can split the log if he can only make an entrance into the wood with the point of his wedge, and so it is with thinking. A person should not allow in his mind the smallest item of discordant thought, because it is there that the danger lies. It is the point of the wedge, and safety lies in not admitting even that.

That wise old Chinese philosopher, Laotsze, said: "Contemplate a difficulty while it is easy. Manage a great thing while it is small." If the seed is destroyed, there will be neither the little shoot nor the rank weed to be uprooted and cast away. The trouble with many of us is that we do not understand, and we allow weeds to grow until they overrun the garden. Let there be neither hesitation nor delay. Discordant thinking gathers force and persistence with every moment it continues. Delay affords it an opportunity to entrench itself, and this only increases the difficulty. If one neglects the little fire, he cannot stop the big conflagration.

The boy coasting, if he sees danger ahead, may check his first movement with very little difficulty. Whether the start is abrupt and the descent steep, or more deliberate in the beginning and the descent more gradual, the stop should be made with decisive promptness the very instant that danger is perceived. Halfway down the declivity, when the velocity is great and the accumulated impetus is considerable, the stop cannot be made so easily.

The boy may put down the brakes, but there is danger of accident, and he must "play the game out" even though he may conclude it sooner because of his efforts. The better and easier way is not to start; or, having started, to stop at the first movement.

The discordant thought should be dropped out of the mind as quickly as a red-hot coal would be dropped out of the hand, and another and harmonious thought should be welcomed in its place with equal celerity. Prompt and decisive action here will save much future effort.

### **PERSISTENCE**

#### **CHAPTER 14**

Every least mental action has its result. By the law of the persistence of energy, nothing ever happens, however seemingly unimportant, without its effect on succeeding events. Astronomers say that the falling of a pebble moves the earth out of its course in exact proportion to the size of the pebble. Everything has its own value and importance. Then we ought to seek out the smallest manifestation of discordant thinking and stop it, because the slightest objectionable thought must have its result, and therefore it should never be allowed to run its course. It would be a serious mistake to suppose any thought too trivial to require attention.

The rule at Donnybrook Fair applies here: "Wherever you see a head, hit it." The least is not too small to be terminated if it is wrong. The little error in its little beginnings ought to be taken care of as soon as it is perceived. Through doing this, one becomes thoroughly prepared for complete mastery of the larger ones whenever they present themselves. Neglect of the little ones will create inability to cope with the greater. Indeed, if this rule is followed, the greater ones will never appear.

It is equally important that the change when once made should be steadfastly maintained. If the erroneous or discordant thought returns, it should again be instantly dismissed, and this should be repeated with every return, regardless of its frequency. To allow its continuance, even for the briefest moment, means greater difficulty in dealing with it. There should be no dallying or postponement. The old German proverb is exactly applicable in this place: "The street By-and-by leads to the house Never."

Professor James gives such a vivid illustration of the effect of failure to maintain constant control of the thinking when once it has been undertaken, and of the extremely slight suggestion which may divert one's mind into its former channel, that the paragraph is inserted here because of the instruction it contains for those who are striving after mental control. He says: -

"For example, I am reciting Locksley Halt in order to divert my mind from a state of suspense that I am in concerning the will of a relative that is dead. The will still remains in the mental background as an extremely marginal and ultra-marginal portion of my field of consciousness; but the poem fairly keeps my attention from it, until I come to the line, 'I, the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time.' The words, 'I, the heir,' immediately make an electric connection with the marginal thought of the will; that, in turn, makes my heart beat with anticipation of my possible legacy, so that I throw down the book and pace the floor excitedly, with visions of my future fortune pouring through my mind."

Emotions are simply states of feeling induced by mental conditions. Control of the thinking will always control the emotions. Men and women who do not exercise this control as they should, thereby allow their emotions to control them to their own destruction. If at the beginning they had controlled their thinking, they would have avoided the whole difficulty. Christison writes, italicizing his words: "In normal mind it can be controlled by the power of the will to exclude or substitute ideas as directed." Every emotion becomes fully controllable by excluding from the mind the thoughts which produced it. This can always be done in the milder forms of thinking, and exercising this control of the milder forms will produce such a mental state that violent conditions will not occur.

Each person who attempts purposely to dismiss discordant thinking will have experiences peculiar to himself. Some thoughts will be more easily set aside than others; and this will vary with his own varying mental conditions. Many difficulties will arise because his thinking heretofore has been allowed to run on without direction and subject to any external suggestion which prompted its others because he approaches the new course of action loaded down with the idea that it requires strenuous effort. Habits of long continuance are not destroyed with a single effort, and perfection of mental control is not attained at once. Many difficulties are sure to appear, but by perseverance they can be overcome. The work will be less difficult and the action more persistent if one realizes that the advantages to be gained vastly outweigh the efforts involved.

As a matter of practice it will be best to begin with that inharmonious thinking which seems the least difficult to overcome. The wise general strives to divide the forces of his enemy and attack each detachment separately, the weakest one first. He thus defeats them more easily because his own strength is greater than that of the portion of the foe upon which all his efforts are concentrated. The athlete did not begin with great things but with the smaller ones, and in the practice of these he gained the strength and wisdom which enabled him to overcome the larger ones.

It is best to follow a similar method in mental training. Divide the enemy and attack the weaker outposts first. These overcome, the intrenched city will not then be so formidable. Lift the smaller weight which is suited to the strength, and the exercise will prepare one for the heavier objects. The highest mountain peak can be scaled only by first ascending the smaller elevations which buttress it.

When the thought that seems of minor importance has been cut off and cast aside, another can be undertaken, and then another. Faculty will come with practice, and what was begun with difficulty will be ended with ease. Each succeeding task may be only a little more difficult than the one already accomplished, and in each he will find advantages arising from his experiences with the former ones. Thus the work may go on from one erroneous thought to another until all discordant thoughts are thrust out.

Each morning let there be an intentional renewal of confidence for the dawning hours. Begin the day with hopeful consideration of the subject. Recount the incidents of yesterday and make an examination of the methods which were adopted to avoid failure and to secure success". This careful consideration of former successful efforts will enlarge the understanding, strengthen the confidence, and materially help to gain greater victories in the coming day. Rejoice mentally and be glad over each triumph. Be very glad. Gladness alone invigorates powerfully, as do all harmonious thoughts. Cultivate gladness. Depression disappears just in proportion as one cultivates gladness and serenity.

It is probable that in the prosecution of this work the beginner will meet with some surprises. Not only will unexpected difficulties present themselves, and that which he expected to dispose of easily prove very persistent, but he may even find himself enjoying and really desiring to continue his indulgence in a line of discordant thinking which heretofore he has suspected to be more or less objectionable, and which, in his clearer understanding, he now knows to be so. In these experiences the careful observer of his own mental processes will gain much wisdom and many a stimulant which will aid him to persist in his efforts to achieve complete success.

Perhaps the greatest danger may arise from discouragement. Under the stimulus of the first enthusiasm all will probably go well, and there will be many successes which will seem wonderful and which may encourage the beginner to think that the work is nearly completed. Possibly the thought may occur that the necessity for so much vigilance has passed, and this may cause a little relaxation of attention and consequent carelessness; or there may be a sense of effort and weariness. These are seductions to beware of, because they are quite liable to be succeeded by slips which are more or less serious and difficult to overcome, and disappointment and discouragement are almost sure to follow.

This is an important place in the course of mental training, for a little hesitation and a little slipping back into the old habits which are so seductive may be fatal to the purpose and cause the abandonment of further effort. At the least it will entail the necessity for greater effort than has been before put forth in order to recover lost ground. As in the case of the habitual drinker who is trying to reform, little lapses, if allowed, are almost sure to lead to more important ones, and it will require more strenuous efforts to overcome them than were requisite at the start. The danger to the drinker is in his first dram, and in this training the serious danger is in allowing the little discordant thought, so small as to seem of no consequence whatever, to continue unchecked; but however great the task, steady persistence and perseverance are sure to succeed at last.

### **NOT ALWAYS EASY**

#### **CHAPTER 15**

It is not claimed that it always appears to be easy to change the thinking in response to one's own choice without reference to external suggestions, or, as must often be the case, in direct opposition to them; nor will one acquire in a day the power to do this every time and on the instant. An established habit of any kind is not broken by a few feeble attempts; but persistent, faithful, determined effort will overcome the most dominant habit that ever fastened itself on a human being.

The single condition necessary to success in this mental training is that one should be enough in earnest to persist in the repetition of the effort every time the excluded thought reappears. The ability to do this is in itself alone extremely valuable even if there were no other consideration. Professor James well says, and none too strongly: "The faculty of bringing back

the wavering attention over and over again is the very root of judgment, character, and will. No one is composed if he have it not. An education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence."

The ability to do this is at the basis of success in securing control of the thinking, and also at the basis of every success in life. The method of doing it, as we have seen, is the very perfection of simplicity and of effectiveness as well, and James is correct when he says that this is preeminently the best education. It ought to be made the basis of all education, for what is learned early in life is learned easily. It is, how-ever, abundantly worth the effort no matter how difficult it may be.

One item of great importance in connection with it is the fact that for its prosecution and attainment one does not require salaried teachers, nor ponderous books, nor any outlay beyond the expenditure of one's own effort; nor does it require any change of living, nor absence from home, nor from any occupation. It can be prosecuted anywhere, under any circumstances, and in connection with any other employment. One may be his own instructor; indeed he must be, for another cannot instruct him in this.

He must himself select and earn his own lessons, find out and correct his own mistakes, and, indeed, do for himself all that a teacher would do for him in another branch of training; but perseverance, persistence, and the determination to succeed will surely overcome all difficulties and bring success. Any one can do it. The whole process consists simply in ceasing to do what ought not to be done, and in repeating that process whenever necessary.

The fact that a person can sometimes successfully control his thinking proves that he may do it every time that he really so desires. What a man has once done he can do again. This fact is of the utmost importance here, because it indicates beyond question that complete success is attainable in spite of all difficulties. He has only to banish the discordant thought each time it returns.

The one who is in earnest and persistently pursues this object should not weary in it. Incidents of more or less importance will present themselves from time to time through the whole course, which will show the amount of progress that has been made and the value of what has already been attained. They will also show what is yet to be done and how to do it. It will be strange if occasions do not arise when the temptation to despair will be almost overwhelming, and success will seem almost impossible; but despair is one of the worst of discordant thoughts and must be dismissed instantly, regardless of its source or provocation. There may also be incidents which seem like failures, but they may all be overcome and turned into successes. Let it be kept steadily in mind that "difficulties are only things to be overcome." The old Chinese proverb says: "Remain careful to the end as in the beginning, and you will not fail in your enterprise."

"I am only telling you," said the Tinker, "what you could do if you tried. Kittles ain't so hard to mend if you keep on."

The only possible course is to persevere through everything. There is no field of action wherein greater or more valuable results can be achieved with a given amount of effort. The way is straight and narrow, but the prize at the end is as great as man ever struggled for. Paul says of one who is seeking better things: "Let him not be weary in well doing, for in due season he shall reap if he faint not." And we need never forget, for it is forever true, that -

"We always may be what we might have been."

### **EFFECT OF THE PHYSICAL ATTITUDE**

#### **CHAPTER 16**

The character of the outward physical expression is of much importance. For instance, the influence of the grief thought upon the body is such as not alone to cause the tears to flow, but also to give its own peculiar expression to the face, to the gestures, and even to the attitude of the whole body. So, likewise with the opposite emotions of happiness, joy, or serenity, each produces in the body its own characteristic expression. In all cases the body follows the mind, and then the mind is influenced by its recognition of the bodily conditions caused by its own previous action.

I have seen a person thrown into feverish conditions by his own mental actions, and then frightened when he recognized the physical conditions which his own mind had caused. The fright was the result of his perception of the fever, was caused by that perception and would not have occurred without it. If, when he perceived the fever, he had also recognized its cause, there would not have been any fear. Hence, though we speak of the influence of the body upon the mind, that influence arises from and is caused by mental action, namely, the mind's perception of the condition of the body,

This bodily action upon the mind, through its recognition of physical conditions, is so strong that if the bodily attitude natural to any mental mood is purposely assumed, that physical attitude will so act upon the mind as to induce those mental conditions which would normally produce the assumed bodily expression. This influence of the body upon the mind through the mind's own action may be used for the control and improvement of mental conditions.

The normal bodily expression for cheerfulness is an erect spinal column, the head well poised, and a general slightly upward direction of the eyes. This very position which cheerfulness would naturally give to the body will itself, if purposely assumed and maintained, produce cheerfulness. In fact, the mental effect resulting from this attitude is such that it is impossible for a person to continue it for half an hour in walking or any other physical activity and remain mentally depressed.

One who is seeking to banish discordant thinking should assume that bodily attitude or expression which the desired harmonious thinking would naturally produce. Let him smile whether he feels like smiling or not. Even a forced smile will assist toward banishing the mental discord.

"Assume a virtue if you have it not." Force a smile that a spontaneous one may follow. It will help toward the introduction of harmonious thinking, and if this is fostered by the right mental effort, the two will work together for immediate success. But let it be a smile and not a grin; at least let it have as much of smile and as little of grin as possible. No one can force a smile without producing somewhat of the smiling thought, just as no one can assume the attitude of cheerfulness without somewhat of cheerfulness arising in the mind. In this lies a large part of the reason why the bodily attitude or expression is so efficacious in bringing into realization the desired mental condition. Behind the clouds which obscure the vision the sun is always shining, and one need not abide in the shadow except by his own choice.

The actor, whether in public or private life, can achieve full success only by producing within himself the mental conditions he would represent; and in like manner he who would win in mental control will find a most powerful assistant toward the production of the desired mental condition by assuming the physical attitude or expression which represents the thought that he desires.

Professor James, in his Talks to Teachers, has a very strong paragraph on this subject: "Thus, the sovereign voluntary path of cheerful-ness, if our spontaneous cheerfulness be lost, is to sit up cheerfully, to look round cheerfully, and to act and



...speak as if cheerfulness were already there. If such conduct does not make you soon feel cheerful, nothing else on that occasion can. So, to feel brave, act as if you were brave, use all your will to that end, and a courage-fit will very likely replace the fit of fear.

Again, in order to feel kindly toward a person to whom we have been inimical, the only way is more or less deliberately to say genial things. One hearty laugh together will bring enemies into closer communion of heart than hours spent on both sides in inward wrestling with the mental demon of uncharitable feeling. To wrestle with a bad feeling only pins our attention to it, and keeps it still potent in the mind; whereas, if we act from some better feeling, the old bad feeling soon folds its tent like an Arab and silently steals away."

James is right in what he says about "wrestling," and the reader will note that the dominant idea of this book is not to wrestle with wrong thinking, but to drop it and, having thus put it out of the mind, let it alone forever.

This is not hypocrisy. It is not done to deceive, as hypocrisy is. It is done for the purpose of banishing wrong thinking—it does it—and that is praiseworthy.

### **ALL ONES OWN WORK**

#### **CHAPTER 17**

This work of excluding discordant thinking from the mind does not involve any attempt to proselyte or to interfere with others in any way. It does not directly concern any one but the person who is engaged in the work for himself, and it certainly does not deal with any one else; neither ought another to interfere unless asked, because such interference would not only be an impertinence but a hindrance. Walt Whitman stated the case clearly and concisely when he wrote:-

"No one can acquire for another—not one. No one can grow for another—not one."

This is true because one cannot either see, hear, or think for another, but each must do these things for himself. Because one's thinking is entirely his own and cannot by any possibility be another's, whatever is involved in thinking with all its contingencies and consequences is necessarily one's own and depends exclusively upon one's own efforts; but the exclusion of discordant thoughts and the ushering in of harmonious ones is the business of thinking solely, and therefore it belongs to one's own self and cannot be delegated to another. The actual cleansing of the temple must be one's own work.

Other things depend more or less on the action of some one else to hinder or to help, but a man's thoughts need not depend in the least upon what another does, or says, or thinks. A man's mind is a domain where, unless he consents, no one but himself can enter, and he need not allow another to have the slightest control over it. His thinking is his own and never another's, and another's need never be his unless he chooses to accept it; therefore the responsibility is all his own also, but the compensation for that lies in the fact that his action may be unimpeded and uninfluenced—free.

The law, in the person of an officer, can take charge of one's body and transport it from place to place or lock it up in prison, can dispose of a man's property as it sees fit, and may compel him to do many things which he himself does not wish to do; but unless he allows it, no human power can enter his mind to interfere with his thinking. A man's thoughts are his own until he gives them utterance, and in the world of his own mind each man may reign supreme. It is the divine right of every human being to think as he pleases.

More important than the old poet imagined was the truth he uttered when he said: "My mind to me a kingdom is," and he would have added to the accuracy and power of the expression if he had said: "My mind to me my kingdom is." A man's mind is indeed his own kingdom, and he ought never to allow it to become the kingdom of another wherein he himself is a subject. If a man has trained his thinking, he may declare more truly than the lone Selkirk:-

"I am monarch of all I survey, my right there is none to dispute."

This is most favorable to the prosecution of mental training, because it places the whole work of development in one's own hands, unimpeded

Holding to this principle, but forgetting that a divine right relates to divine things, it has been widely held that a man has the right to think what he pleases, provided his thoughts have no out-ward expression in word or deed; but the conclusion is irresistible that a man has no more right to think wrong thoughts than he has to do wrong deeds. Immoral thinking should be held in abeyance as inflexibly as immoral action, for it is the root of all immorality. And uninfluenced by others. A modern writer has truly said, though with a note of sadness which does not belong to it, that "in all its deepest experiences the soul is solitary. Every crucial choice must be solitary." Though this mental solitariness is a necessity, it does not cause a man to hold aloof from others, nor does it prohibit one single valuable social pleasure or advantage; but it is a boon, and a glory as well, and it may bring a consciousness of power, dominion, and freedom that cannot come from any other source. He, who has trained his mind to obey his own behests and has asserted and realized his rightful mental supremacy over himself, can better enjoy contact with his fellows and can reap greater advantage from association with them. Over him there can-not be any domination by others, whatever their course, and he will enjoy a freedom that nothing but mental control can give.

Here at last is ideal freedom, which, when coupled with recognition of the self-control which is inseparable from it, gives man a sense of ability to be and to do such as nothing else can. The greatest strength lies in the vivid realization of this fact when one really awakes to its existence. He can himself, as he chooses, thrust aside impedimenta within himself without interfering with another, and with no one to interfere with his action or to ask why. This ability is not to be spasmodically expressed, but is always to be steadily maintained. In nothing else does man need to be alone, but here he stands entirely alone and yet without any sense of loneliness; indeed, this very aloneness may become one of his greatest blessings, for, having banished discordant thoughts, here one may, as Emerson directs, "stay at home in his heaven." The results for good may reach out into the vast unknown of humanity in unexpected and undreamed-of ways which were never planned.

### **DESTRUCTION OF DISCORDANT THOUGHTS**

#### **CHAPTER 18**

The advantage and efficiency of the course here advocated rest in large part upon the important fact, perhaps not often noted, that those things a person is not thinking about are, to him, at the time, as though they did not exist. Thus, through forgetfulness, an object or an idea passes entirely out of consciousness, and, to the thinker, during the time of forgetfulness, it is as though it had never existed. It can be brought back by recollection, when the thinker will once more have it in mind; that is, by the mental action it will again become to him a reality.

The mere sight of a thing is not what gives it reality, for to the sight of it must be added consciousness of that sight. This consciousness is itself a form of thinking which must take place before the thing becomes a reality to the one who sees it;

therefore before it enters into consciousness and after it passes out of consciousness it does not exist to the thinker.

We laugh at the person who becomes so absorbed in some special thought as to be wholly unaware of everything else. To him, at the time, the one thing he is thinking about is all there is in existence. On the other hand, he may be thinking so intently as to make a thing real to him even in its absence. A man was accustomed to shave himself every morning before a mirror which had hung for a long time in one particular place. The mirror was removed, but for several days he went as usual to the same place and shaved himself without accident, just as he had done when the mirror was there; but one morning his attention was called to the absence of the mirror, and he cut himself when he thus was made aware that he no longer had its assistance. To those who are specially intent on one particular thing, the only thing that exists is the one they are thinking about, and that is existent to them whether it is to others or not. The only difference between such a man and the ordinary person lies solely in the fact that he is recalled to consciousness of existent conditions with more difficulty than others are.

Every one has sometimes been so engrossed as to be wholly unaware of things going on around him; but this only indicates intense mental attention in one direction to the entire exclusion of all else. Many a person has become so absorbed in a game of cards as to lose all consciousness of pain, and some have indulged in the game that they might make themselves oblivious to both physical and mental suffering. This is a form of forgetfulness; the thought is no longer in the mind, and, having passed out of the mind, it no longer creates discord nor generates injurious chemical substances in the body. When this is made permanent it is called healing; and the person who has trained himself so that he has complete control over his mind can make it permanent without the excitement of a game of cards.

Things are real to the thinker because they are in his mind, and it makes no difference to him how unreal they may be if he believes them to be real. This is illustrated by all those who labor under hallucinations. Non-existent things are real to such persons, and often they are so intently engaged in these unrealities and believe in them to such an extent as not to be aware of the realities which are pressing them.

But we do not need to go to the insane for examples. He who is fully persuaded that his friend is false, however untrue that may be, is in the same condition both mentally and physically as if it were true. The world is full of such incidents, and they have come within the observation of every one. It is thinking that makes the thing real, and in the absence of that thinking it does not exist.

Two things are to be noted in this connection. First, absence of the reality from the mind does not destroy that reality; it only makes it unreal to the one who is not thinking about it – makes it, to him, as unreal as though it did not exist. Second, presence of the unreality in the mind does not make it a reality. It is real only to the thinker; but, being real to him, its effects on him are the same as though it were indeed a reality. It is a well-known fact that a man who thought he was bleeding to death died from the thought, though he had not lost a drop of blood; and there are thousands of similar unnoted and unrecorded instances.

The practice of substituting one thought for another is admirable and is not to be abandoned until something better can be done, but destruction of the discordant thought would be a far more effectual method. The exclusion of a thought from the mind is, for the thinker, its destruction while it is excluded; and its continuous exclusion, so that it should never return, would be its complete destruction for him. This is the supreme result of constant practice in the exclusion of erroneous or discordant thoughts. If it is an erroneous thought, or a thought of error, the error is thus for him literally and completely destroyed. If the whole world would thus exclude the erroneous thought, it would no longer have any existence.

The correctness of this statement is more readily perceived in those cases which concern an erroneous belief in the existence of something which is easily recognizable as non-existent, such as the supposed falsity of a friend who is not false. While that falsity is a fact to the one who thoroughly believes it, still its destruction is complete the instant the thought is dropped out of mind, and if the thought is dropped forever, then the destruction is forever. The same thing is true of the fear of an impending disaster which will never occur. Such fear can be so completely dismissed from the mind that it is utterly destroyed. It is the same with all erroneous thoughts.

The two methods of substitution and destruction work together; substitution sustaining and assisting the work, and, if persisted in, finally resulting in total obliteration of the objectionable thoughts. Some one has truly said that more than nine-tenths of the ills of life are occasioned by anxiety (thinking) about events that never happen. Neither the things nor the anxiety exist except in thought. Then if that thought is put out of mind, or destroyed, those ills disappear forever.

They are destroyed.

Though it is only a thought that is destroyed, yet in that thought exists a cause; and let it not be forgotten that every discordant thought is the cause of discordant mental and bodily conditions, and the cause being destroyed, the consequences do not appear, so that literally the destruction of discordant or erroneous thinking is the destruction of the possibility of wrong conditions. The man who quits lying can do nothing else but tell the truth; so, too, The saddest fact in the world is sin, however it may be accounted for. But here is a method whereby it may be destroyed, and this is the method of Jesus, the Christ. (See last chapter.) He would have us put all error (and that includes all sin) out of the mind completely. To do this is the essential of forgiveness, because to forgive means to put away; and when we have put away from ourselves (by putting them out of mind our own errors and the errors of others, they will not any longer exist to trouble us. When every one does this, there will no longer be any sin. He who destroys the discordant thoughts cannot do otherwise than think harmonious ones, and the destruction of all discordant thoughts would leave in existence only those which are harmonious. This would result in the production of none but harmonious actions and the establishment of harmonious conditions without any discordant ones to interfere. This is the grand ultimate object. It can be attained through mental control, and thus men may rid themselves of more of the ills of life and gain more of its advantages than one who has not tried it would believe possible.

## **SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS**

### **CHAPTER 19**

While avoiding Scylla the ancient Grecian mariner had to beware lest he wreck on Charybdis. In the attempt to avoid certain discordant thoughts one must beware lest he fall into indulgence in others of similar character which may arise in connection with the effort.

It will be strange if disturbing thoughts do not sometimes present themselves, but mental disquiet of any kind must not for any reason be allowed in any part of the process. That discouragement which comes from occasional or even frequent failure must be dismissed as promptly as were the first discordant thoughts; neither must it be recognized as failure, but only as an

incident in a process which will terminate in success. Thus will be established more securely and easily the habit which probably was more than half formed when the discouragement arose.

Along with the sense of disappointment and regret at temporary or incidental failure, and suggested by it, is quite likely to come self-condemnation, and this may be followed by grief, anxiety, discouragement, and even despair. They never assist in the least; they always hinder. It is not necessary to blame one's self in order to correct an error which has been made. No man is helped to be better by grieving over the things he has done. Getting rid of one evil is no advantage if another quite as bad is allowed to arise in its place.

Ruskin states one side of the case correctly, clearly, and strongly when he says: "Do not think of your faults; still less of others' faults; in every person that comes near you look for what is good and strong; honor that, rejoice in it; and, as you can, try to imitate it, and your faults will drop off like dead leaves when their time comes."

A sense of the responsibility or of the burden of the work should not be allowed in connection with the attempt to exclude discordant thinking, nor should there be any vestige of a thought of anxiety lest the ejected thought return to create another state of mental disquiet. If these are allowed, the second state of that man will be worse than the first, because he will be weighed down by two kinds of erroneous thinking instead of one.

Even though he may have successfully banished one set of thoughts of which he wished to rid himself, he will find that he has enslaved himself to another group as bad as the first. To allow such thoughts to spring up alongside the attempt to weed out others is not to clear the field of discordant thinking, but to change from one set of intruders to another; or, worse than that, to introduce another set, and this is the exact reverse of the object aimed at. No one thought of the discordant class should be admitted any more than another, and there is no more reason or justification for harboring one than another; still less is there any reason for allowing two. So far as any one of them is allowed it defeats mental control and its advantages just as effectually as would the continuance of the original erroneous thoughts.

In the beginning of this mental training strenuous effort may seem unavoidable, but with persistent practice better mental conditions will be established, so that in most cases the change of thinking may be accomplished without appreciable effort. From the very first the thought that there may be any necessity for such effort should be banished as far as possible, because it induces more or less dread of the under-taking and doubt of its success. Consciousness of effort detracts from the ideal of the perfect action, and complete success is not reached until the change of thought can be made without it.

The desired object may be accomplished thoroughly by entering into that perfect mental freedom which arises from such exclusive devotion to the work of the moment as to shut out all other considerations, and to leave all the time and strength for the business in hand. Indeed, this work when rightly done is done so quickly in each succeeding experience that there is neither time nor opportunity for any other disturbing mental conditions than those to which the effort was first directed. All this may be accomplished without any diminution of activity or energy; instead there will be an increase of effectiveness in all right directions.

## **MORAL DISCRIMINATION**

### **CHAPTER 20**

To stop thinking discordant thoughts does not necessitate change of former conclusions as to the kind, character, quality, or conditions of any subject under consideration; these should remain undisturbed unless sufficient reasons appear for making a change. A man may refrain from striking the person he hates without changing his opinion of that man's character; and in like manner one may refrain from angry or otherwise discordant thinking without attempting to persuade himself that the other person is praiseworthy.

One is not in the least aided, but rather is he hindered, in his attempts toward harmonious thinking by calling black white, bad good, wrong right, or in any way trying to persuade himself into an incorrect opinion. Such a course would falsify and degrade one's standard of right, and that must necessarily always be a serious disadvantage. It is lying to himself, because even while he says an enemy is a friend he knows he is not; and though all lying is wrong, if there is any difference at all, it is worse to lie to one's self than to any one else.

The search for the good in everything should not be degraded into an attempt to see everything as good or to think that bad is good. Such a course would confuse the judgment as to what is good and what is not good. There is already too much of that. All ideas on these subjects should be kept as clear, positive, and distinct as possible; and the line of demarcation between the two should always remain undisturbed.

Good is good and bad is bad whatever may be said or thought about them. If the bad presents itself, it should be recognized, understood, and known in its true character so as to be avoided; but this may be done without discordant thinking of any kind whatever, and with the conscious certainty that the good is close at hand.

One can never afford to think that bad is good, nor that his own defect is desirable, nor that his misfortune is in itself an advantage; neither of them is ever a necessity, not even to teach lessons, because if one's understanding is sufficient, he may learn the lesson beforehand, and that will enable him to avoid the adverse circumstances. Every one should stop condemning the bad man, should stop being angry at the ill turn his friend has done him, should stop his regret for the misfortune which overtook him, and stop self-condemnation because of his own defect—should, in fact, stop all discordant thinking about anything and everything—and he may do all this without any change of his opinion about the object, the person, or the affair. When this is done, he can look at any and all things justly and fairly, see them as they are, learn all that is to be learned about them, arrive at correct conclusions, decide what is right or advisable to do under the circumstances, and then act upon his decision.

The true character of every error or mistake which one may make should be correctly understood and properly appreciated; but this can be accomplished better and with more clearness, certainty, and accuracy without discordant thinking than with it.

Avoidance of such thoughts does not imply avoidance of a correct understanding of the rightful value and character of the things with which one has come in contact. The instant which has passed, the mistake which has been made, the sin which has been committed—all these things should be divested of every gloss of circumstance and of every fictitious appearance, and then they should be studied carefully and exhaustively so that they may be correctly understood as they really are, to the end that in the future they may be more easily avoided. This is reasonable and practical, and conduct is thus more wisely directed and becomes vastly more efficient.

There need not be any fear that those who persistently attempt to exclude discordant thinking will lose their recognition of the difference between right and wrong because of such exclusion. On the contrary, the mental training here proposed will bring

a keener perception of those differences because the practice of discrimination between the erroneous and discordant on the one hand, and the true and harmonious on the other, is necessary to successful prosecution of the work.

Indeed, no correct action can be taken under the rule without more or less of such discrimination; and, as a necessary result of the exercise of such discrimination, one must become possessed of an increased keenness and accuracy of discernment, and therefore of judgment, as to the true character of his thoughts and acts as well as a clearer insight into the moral qualities of his thinking. These desirable conditions will steadily increase as he progresses. He will come to understand clearly where before he doubted. Some things which before were accepted as right will be questioned until, finally, they will be better understood and consequently rejected as wrong; and other things which were once thought to be wrong may later be found to be right. To one desiring to know what is right (and every one in his best moments does) this method will be most valuable.

In pursuing this course will be found an exemplification of Jesus' declaration: "Whosoever will do [chooses to do] His [God's] will, shall know of the doctrine [teaching]." The same thought changed into different words might read: Whosoever really and earnestly chooses to do right and perseveres in doing it shall learn how.

### **A LITTLE ANALYSIS AND ITS APPLICATION**

#### **CHAPTER 21**

Perhaps more often than otherwise discordant thinking is provoked by some incident, condition, or thing external to one's self. The connection in the mind between thoughts and their causes is very close, but there are two kinds of these thoughts, —those which are simply thoughts about the occurrence without any quality of discord whatever, and those which are also thoughts about the occurrence but which are discordant in their character. These are entirely distinct, therefore dismissal of the discordant thoughts does not necessitate dismissal of all thought connected with an incident any more than throwing out the decayed fruit necessitates throwing out the perfect fruit also.

So complicated has become the ordinary life of today that very little of our thinking is simple. Analysis shows that all our thoughts are more or less complex, being made up by the union of a multitude of elements, each with its distinct characteristics. These may run along together in seemingly inextricable union, yet they are distinct and do not in the slightest depend upon each other for existence. Such of these elements as are discordant may be wholly excluded from the mind without any interference with the others and without any loss of efficiency either in thinking or in acting, but with a decided advantage to both.

This does not mean that the objects, duties, and requirements from which discordant thoughts seem to spring are to be abandoned, nor that a person is to stop thinking about them; it only means that one should eliminate the discordant thoughts which may arise in connection with them. There is a wide difference between thinking about an object or occurrence in a harmonious manner, as one ought, and thinking discordantly, as one ought not.

These two kinds of thinking run so close alongside each other that in the prosecution of mental control it sometimes appears necessary to stop all thinking about the provoking cause. In earlier attempts this method is often the best and most successful. If all thinking about the subject is put out of mind for a little time, one will find that later he can enter upon a full consideration of it without introducing any discordant mental conditions whatever, and the proper consideration of the subject can then be undertaken with a good prospect of arriving at correct results.

It is only after all such thoughts have been swept away that the mind is prepared for a keen, just, and fair examination of the situation; the whole field can then be clearly surveyed, and the best possible decision made concerning the conditions and the course to be pursued in connection with them.

A person's friend may have acted improperly toward him, and he may recognize that he is himself stirred by it to anger, regret, grief, or some other kind of discordant thinking. This should be dismissed without a moment's hesitation. Every one has experienced the physical sensations which succeed such thinking, and this dismissal should be so instantaneous and so complete that no "feeling" will follow the recognition of the incident. Mere mental attention to this discordant "feeling" disturbs the current of harmonious thinking even if there were nothing else to interfere.

When the discordant thoughts are completely excluded, one can make an accurate investigation of the incident. How did it happen? What was the cause? Who was to blame? Had he himself done anything to provoke his friend to such a course? What is right and therefore best to do under the circumstances? These and many other questions will present themselves for decision, but not one of them should be allowed to provoke any mental discord, because, just in proportion to its intensity would that discord inevitably tend toward inaccuracy of thinking and consequent erroneous conclusions; but in its absence one may judge coolly and calmly and act wisely.

Avoidance of discordant thinking does not mean neglect of any duty nor shirking of any right undertaking. On the contrary, it means more vigorous and efficient activity in the discharge of every right duty or obligation and more complete and effective accomplishment of every right object. It means removal of a large class of serious mental and physical hindrances to activity and efficiency. It means avoidance of all the physical discords and discomforts which are brought upon one's self by the useless impediments produced by discordant thinking. It means dispensing with the useless and injurious in order that there may be more time and energy for the beneficial and valuable. To cease such thinking will leave mind and body clear, strong, able, and ready to do more and better work along all right lines.

We look upon the evils of today and are more or less disturbed by them, and the more closely they are related to us the more considerable is our discordant thinking and consequent discordant and injurious emotion. We look upon the evils of a past century and learn all the circumstances connected with them with only a mild wave of discord. As we walk we note the obstacle in the path, perhaps with regret, or anger, or condemnation of the man who placed it there, perhaps even with despair at our inability to pass it; or, we may so control ourselves that we do not have the slightest mental disquiet, and, because of the absence of that discord, we find our way past it all the more readily. We may so train our thinking that finally, by habit thoroughly established, we shall have no more discordant thoughts about any event than we have about those which happened thousands of years ago, or about those of the present time which do not in the slightest concern us.

One ought not to consider his mental training complete until he can, with entire equanimity, meet all incidents which affect him personally and can consider them carefully with entire freedom from any discordant thinking or feeling.

### **HABIT**

#### **CHAPTER 22**



There has long been a tendency among moralists to decry habit, perhaps because their attention has been directed more frequently toward bad habits than good ones, or they may have been more interested in destroying bad habits than in creating good ones. The popular idea of the preponderance of evil habits has also come, in part at least, from the undue magnitude which evil has been allowed to assume in the human mind, and from the consequent belief that habit turns more largely toward evil than toward good. This may be a relic of the "religious" idea formerly so carefully cultivated by a considerable class of teachers of morality, and therefore widely believed, that man is totally depraved and as "prone to do evil as the sparks to fly upward." Centuries ago Ovid wrote:-

"Ill habits gather by unseen degrees, As brooks make rivers, rivers run to seas."

This statement has the disadvantage of being negative in character, thereby suggesting those discordant thoughts which arise from doubts about successfully overcoming an increasing evil; but there is another and far more desirable view of this subject which has the great advantage of being correct as well as encouraging.

Habit is the result of the natural tendency of the mind to persist in doing those things which it has many times been set to do. A new action is often accomplished slowly and with difficulty, but repetition results in greater facility, and it may be continued until at last it is performed without conscious effort or attention and without the exercise of any volition beyond the choice to begin. This is the origin of a majority, some say of all those actions which are looked upon as reflex or automatic and which seem to occur independently of any mental action whatever; and in this way any action repeatedly performed may finally become reflex or automatic. This being the case, the door is open whereby a man can control not only his conscious thinking, but by the control and creation of habit may also create and control that thinking of which he is not conscious.

The action of the piano player is an excellent illustration of the way habit works for us. So is the incident of that musician who was stricken with epilepsy in the midst of his orchestral performance, but who continued to play accurately to the end. He had established the habit by his own long-continued efforts. It takes the musician a long time to set up this habit, and he considers it well worth the effort; but the end sought in the control of discordant thinking is vastly more valuable than the musical accomplishment, however desirable that may be.

Habit works with absolute impartiality; for good with the same facility and effectiveness that it does for evil; for right thinking just as powerfully as for wrong thinking; and the increasing momentum and power of a good action repeated is just as great as that of a bad one. One may easily control the initial idea either to emphasize and repeat it or to avoid it.

If a person persistently does that, the tendency, whatever it may be, whether inherited or otherwise acquired, and however firmly entrenched, can be modified or destroyed. By constant repetition the habit of avoiding discordant thinking may be established just as firmly as any other, and with no more effort, for habit, good or bad, is only action oft repeated.

If one refuses to allow discordant thoughts to continue, stopping them every time he is conscious of them, the habit will finally be so confirmed that whenever the objectionable thought is presented, the mind will of itself automatically refuse to entertain it; and this, too, without any conscious attention from the person, just as the musician presses the keys of his instrument without the least recognition of the thinking which produces the motion. By habit the mind will persist in not doing whatever it has been trained not to do with the same readiness and ease which it manifests in doing the things it has been trained to do. Thus, this habit may be so cultivated that when any suggestions of discordant thinking arise they will "stop themselves." To establish any habit the action of the mind only needs to be given the right direction by continuous repetition, but it is all-important that the obtruding thought should be banished every time and on the instant that it appears. Man should understand this fact, be encouraged by it, and take advantage of it.

An immense proportion of our good actions are habitual, and that is as it should be. Professor James says: "The fact is that our virtues are habits as much as our vices." We should establish the habit of good, useful, and virtuous actions as soon as possible by setting up correct habits of thinking.

When Ovid's couplet is reversed it is as true as when it is read in the way he wrote it; and in its modified form it has the advantages of being just as accurate as in its original form and also of giving vastly more encouragement to those who are striving to establish better mental conditions for themselves:

"Good habits gather by unseen degrees, As brooks make rivers, rivers run to seas."

### **THE RELATION OF THINKING TO HEALTH**

#### **CHAPTER 23**

The relation of thinking to every bodily action from the smallest to the greatest is that of cause to effect, therefore the same is true of the relation of thinking to health and disease. Harmonious thinking is the cause; health is the effect. Discordant thinking is the cause; disease is the effect. Each person has built as he would; each person may build as he will.

This becomes broadly apparent if the statement of President Hall be accepted, that there is no change of thought without a change of muscle. Still more clearly does this appear in Professor James's declaration that mental states always lead to changes in breathing, general muscular tension, circulation, and glandular or other visceral activity. These point directly to the statement by Professor Gates that anger, jealousy, hate, or any malevolent thinking causes the secretion in the system of various injurious substances, including poisons. The circulation of the blood and all other bodily functions are interfered with by passion or emotion. Laughter and tears are physical conditions involving changes of muscles and of glandular secretions, and their causes are purely mental.

The same is true in all bodily conditions.

But, objects one, I did not think of a headache, yet I woke with it in the morning. Very true. Neither did the thief think of stealing when he began to wish for his neighbor's property; nor did the mother, weeping over her lost son, think of shedding tears; nor did the man in a convulsive fit of laughter plan to laugh. Had there been no thought of the ludicrous, there would have been no laughter. Had there been no thought of grief in the mother's mind, there would have been no tears. Had there been no desire for what was another's, there would have been no stealing; and had there been no discordant thought, there would have been no headache.

Professor Gates's experiments show the direct influence of thinking upon the health. He found that anger produced a brownish substance which appeared in the breath. He continued his experiments until he had obtained enough of that substance so that he could give it to men and animals as medicine is administered. In every case it produced nervous excitability or irritability. In his experiments with another kind of thinking he obtained another substance from the breath which he injected in the veins of a guinea-pig, and the pig died in a very few minutes.

After saying that hate is accompanied by the greatest expenditure of vital energy, he enumerates several of its chemical products, all poisonous, and concludes by saying: "Enough would be eliminated in one hour of intense hate, by a man of average strength, to cause the death of perhaps fourscore persons, as these ptomaines are the deadliest poisons known to science."

He experimented with two young ladies. They were first tested in various ways to ascertain their general condition. One was then required to make a list of all the delightful, pleasant, enjoyable, or fortunate incidents in her life. The other made a list of all the events of a directly opposite kind in her life. He kept each thinking upon her own list as continuously as possible for thirty days, and then they were tested in the same manner as at the beginning. The first had gained most remarkably, while the second lost in nearly the same proportion.

All bodily actions and conditions, whether intended or not, are consequences of thinking, and since disease is a bodily action or condition, the rule holds good for all diseases. Thoughts of grief, regret, anxiety, or fear which follow bad news often find their physical consequence in a disturbance of the nerves of the stomach; and, in exact proportion to the intensity of these thoughts, they bring about such a disordered condition of that organ as to impair or even suspend digestion. We say, "It struck to the stomach."

This expression is figurative, but accurate; and nearly every one has had a similar experience. If we examine ourselves, we find that "it" was a thought or a group of thoughts. The disturbed condition of the stomach caused by "it" varies with the variation of the other attendant mental and physical conditions. The disordered stomach may affect the head, causing dizziness or headache, or it may disturb the optic nerve so as to cause dimness of vision, or it may act upon other portions of the body in discordant ways, causing debility, weakness, pain, or suffering of many kinds and of longer or shorter duration, according to the intensity, continuance, or frequency of the repetition of the discordant thinking.

It is not necessary, as has been asserted by many, that one should think of a special disease in order to produce it. On the contrary, disease is seldom caused by direct thought of the particular disorder which afterward appears, although it may be so caused and sometimes is; but discordant thoughts of some kind set the train in motion. Sometimes the train is a long one, with many physical and mental actions and conditions existing between the initial thought and the disease in which the series culminates.

Although the incident which appears to be the immediate cause of the disease may be purely physical in character, yet that incident must itself have had its cause which, if sought, will at last be found in some mental action or condition. Too small or improperly shaped shoes may be worn until the feet become distorted, diseased, and painful, and this will change the whole attitude and action of the person.

When the shoes were selected, this result was not thought of, least of all was it intended. It may be said that the cause of this suffering was purely physical, yet certain ideas regarding the size and appearance of the shoes governed their selection, and, causing that, caused all that followed, including the suffering. Thus, the origin of it all was thinking, even though remote from its consequences to the health. Sometimes diseases of maturity and old age may be clearly traced to some thinking of childhood or youth which had long disappeared from the consciousness of the person.

History is full of illustrations of diseases directly caused by mental conditions, many of them noted in the records of the medical profession. Dr. John Hunter, the great English surgeon, suffered from disease of the heart which he himself ascribed to his fear of having contracted hydrophobia when dissecting the body of a patient; and it is said that his own death was the result of a fit of anger.

Although it is possible that in some instances there may be such a combination of known circumstances with known thinking as to show beyond question that a particular disease was the result of some special kind of thinking, yet it does not necessarily follow that this disease is always the result of this particular thinking, nor that this thinking always produces this particular disease. We do not know anything about the unnoticed or subconscious thinking and not very much about that which is undirected; that is, we do not know anything of the specific character of some of the causes, and of others very little, consequently our knowledge is too insufficient to enable us to draw special conclusions which shall necessarily be correct.

It may be beyond question that a certain headache was caused by anger, but it does not necessarily follow that every headache has anger for its cause, nor even that anger causes headache in a majority of cases. There are more than a score of other mental conditions which might result in headache, and there is a large number of physical conditions besides headache which may be caused by anger. Hence, it is not possible to demonstrate that any given disease is always produced by some one particular kind of thinking.

This is illustrated by the fact that one man turns pale from anger while another flushes. In one of these cases the blood is sent away from the surface by the same mental action which in the other sends it to the surface. That the blood may take these opposite directions in two different persons under the impulse of the same kind of thinking indicates clearly the erroneousness of singling out any one particular set of discordant thoughts as the cause of any special infirmity. The attempt to banish certain thoughts for the purpose of securing immunity from a particular disease might be successful in eradicating the disease in one person, but it might not have that effect in another. The whole brood of discordant thoughts should be banished, and the eradication of any erroneous thought will be followed by good results even if it does not terminate the particular disease in question.

To stop wrong or discordant thinking for the purpose of securing good health is not the highest motive. The moral considerations are the primal and most important reasons for doing it, but to do it for reasons of health is better than to continue the wrong thinking, and physical health is greatly to be desired. The destruction of all wrong thoughts would eradicate all disease as well as all erroneous actions, and would purify the whole man.

The principles under consideration clearly explain the cause of relapse, or the recurrence of a disease once cured. If the healing is followed by the requisite change in the mental habits of the person cured, that is, by the avoidance and eradication of the thinking which caused the disease, then it will not return. If there is no change in these habits, the thinking which produced the disease in the first place will produce it again. This explains why Jesus told persons whom he had healed to go and sin no more. It also explains why he told his disciples both to heal and to preach. Instruction (preaching) should accompany every case of healing so that the cause may be avoided in the future and then, of course, there will be no recurrence of the disease.

But some one asks about those diseases which were caused by physical excess; are they also results of thinking? The answer is that they are, either directly or indirectly, because every excess has for its cause, back of all else, some mental

action or condition. This might have been changed in its beginning or in its course, and then the consequences would have been different. Delirium tremens follows excessive use of alcoholic stimulants. It may be claimed that drinking was the cause, and so it was; but the drinking was itself the result of thinking and would not have occurred had the man ceased thinking those thoughts which led to it.

The condition is not changed even if drunkenness is the consequence of heredity, or inherited tendencies. In that case the series of thoughts and circumstances is merely lengthened by removing the causative thinking farther away from the resultant disease. Those inherited tendencies were the results of ancestral thoughts and consequent actions. If the ancestor had avoided those thoughts he would not have bequeathed "the legacy of damnation" to his children. Yet, even when such an inherited tendency exists, because thinking caused it rigid control of one's own thinking will destroy it. Such conditions may require greater effort than in most other cases, but sufficient effort is possible, and if it is continued steadily and firmly, the final triumph is certain.

The incipient causes of those physical conditions which are occasioned by accidents will always be found in thinking, or in lack of thinking, which is in the same domain. A man falls and breaks an arm because he is thinking of something else than his footsteps. The defective building falls and crushes the occupants because the builder was thinking of the greater gain he might make by less careful construction or by the use of defective or cheaper materials. The railroad wreck was the result of a misplaced switch, and this in turn was caused by lack of the attention of the switchman who thought the train had passed, or that it was not due. And so on through the entire chapter. When followed to the ultimatums, however much accidents may at first appear to result from wholly physical causes, yet mind and its action will at last be found to have been their occasion in every instance.

Even in a wider and deeper way than all this, the very possibility of breaking the bone or crushing the limb may be the result of the habitual thought that the race has entertained from time immemorial. The catalogue of the diseases of immorality is a very long one, and every day careful observers in the medical profession are adding other names not heretofore suspected of belonging in that list. Thinking is always the beginning of immorality, and therefore thinking is the ultimate cause of all those diseases occasioned by it. Immorality merely intervenes between the thinking and the disease. Immoral thoughts cannot be indulged in without producing their mental and physical consequences. They not only have their evil results in the disturbed or diseased physical system, but they write their record where it may be read by all men.

Those who recognize the causative character of thinking sometimes say that all sickness is the result of sin. While it is true that all sickness is the result of error, it is also true that not all error is sin. Error arises out of not knowing, and that is ignorance; but though ignorance may be reckoned as erroneous, it could hardly be classed as sinful. It is therefore cruel, and very often unjust, to charge those who are suffering from physical infirmity with being sinners.

This is condemnation, and all condemnation is to be avoided because it is discordant; but, more than that, in this place the condemnation may be misplaced and wholly undeserved. If the good man who is sick only knew that wrong thinking is as bad as wrong actions, he would stop his discordant thinking as effectually as he checked his erroneous actions. He may be ill because of ignorance and error, but not necessarily because of sin. Self-control, through control of the thinking, may be the healing of every conscientious person who has hitherto controlled his actions, but who has only repressed his thinking.

Herein may be seen the reason why so many persons are afflicted with disease even though their "daily walk and conduct" is above reproach. The good man who is always ailing may persistently keep his discordant thoughts in mind but conceal them. He knows he ought not to injure his neighbor, yet, because of his ideas about what is right, he may think it is his duty to condemn and despise him in his heart. By sheer force of will such men control the tongue, the hand, and all outward actions, but leave the cause which would otherwise produce those actions to prey unchecked and uncontrolled upon themselves.

Discordant thoughts when repressed, like the fire that is smothered but not extinguished, rankle within all the more fiercely for their restraint, straining and torturing the nerves, preventing the normal and rightful glandular and visceral activity, ruining the muscles, sapping the strength of the bones, generating those harmful secretions which create every variety of disease and infirmity, burning the man with fevers, freezing him with chills, starving him with dyspepsia, and poisoning him with their injurious chemical products.

Repressed thoughts are all the time striving for expression or outlet in some form of physical activity; and, therefore, throughout their whole duration, there exists the necessity for the counter-effort in greater degree in order to keep the body in check. The energy necessary to maintain muscular control in the repression of discordant mental activity requires strenuous and wearying exercise of the will which increases the burden and is decidedly injurious to body, mind, and morals. None of this energy would have been required had the thoughts been dropped out of the mind as soon as they appeared. Therefore, though a good man may not show it to the world, yet all the time he may be ruining his health and happiness with his discordant thinking.

Probably, in addition to all the rest, the man who thus represses his thinking has, in most respects, a high moral standard and a sensitive conscience which is outraged by the presence of such thoughts. This creates the keen mental discord of regret, self-condemnation, grief, and remorse to furnish additional, and equally discordant, and therefore equally injurious, mental elements which do their work as effectively as any others. Such thoughts may remain dormant and unnoticed in the mind for years, finally to flash out into expression at some unfortunate moment very much to his own surprise as well as to the surprise of his friends. Thus, difficulty is piled on top of difficulty until it is no wonder that such a man, though outwardly good, fails to possess healthful vigor and elasticity. The wonder is that he lives out half his days, but what might he not be if he would only drop discordant thinking.

## **RECAPITULATION OF PRINCIPLES**

### ***CHAPTER 24***

In all human activities three occurrences follow one another in regular order: (1) the external incident; (2) the thinking which follows the incident and (3) the bodily action which is caused by the thinking, is governed by it, and consequently takes its character from it.

Then, since the bodily action is governed by the thinking, it is not governed by the circumstance which provoked that thinking; and since the character of all bodily action is established and controlled by the thinking exclusively, therefore it must be the same with those conditions known as health and disease. This conclusion being correct, then it follows that those bodily conditions which are looked upon as purely physical are always given their character by the thinking.

Take for illustration a blow on the finger. There are two avenues by which the blow comes into the mental consciousness.

One is along the nerve of transmission through the hand, up the arm and neck into the brain. The other is by the more direct way of the light vibrations from the finger to the optic nerve in the eye and thence along that nerve to the brain. This last route is shorter than the other, and the larger part of the distance is by a method vastly more rapid than the nerves afford. Hence, the "message" arrives sooner by this route than by the first, so that one sees the blow before he feels it.

The only exception to this order is in those cases where the action originates in the mind itself without any stimulus from an external occurrence.

Between the perception of the blow by way of the line of sight and the perception by way of the nerve, there is an appreciable instant of time, ample in which to think, because thinking is practically instantaneous. According to the principles here set forth, this thinking decides the character of the action which shall follow the blow, and in point of fact such is the case. This has been experienced by all those who have made careful observations of their mental and physical actions under such circumstances. If the control of the mind is rightly and completely maintained, so that there is no discordant thinking preceding and during this instant, there will not be any pain. This has been done repeatedly and may be done by any one who will control his thinking. Similar experiences have occurred not only in connection with blows, but also with burns and other accidents. There have been numerous cases where boiling water has been poured over the hand or other part of the body without pain or other ill effects. Success in this has been so complete in many instances that not only was there no pain, but the blister and other usual physical results did not follow. This can always be accomplished whenever an interval of time exists between the two announcements of the incident, provided the person is on the alert and has trained himself in the control of his thinking.

These experiences are of the simplest character, and, because they are simple, the desirable results are more easily accomplished, but they demonstrate the accuracy of the general proposition because the simple conditions on which they rest are the same as those on which rest all bodily actions however complicated. From facility in these simpler things it is possible, as in any sphere of activity, to advance to equally successful management of the more complicated and difficult affairs.

The fact that harmonious thinking during the interval controls and gives character to the bodily actions is a physical and practical demonstration of the principle, because if the thinking has been, as usual, discordant, the usual pain will follow.

The necessity for complete exclusion of every variety of discordant thinking is seen in the fact that it is not always enough to avoid the discordant thinking which is directly connected with the particular incident in hand. All discordant thinking whatever must be excluded at the time in order to gain complete success. One who was thoroughly trained in this practice was surprised at failure and unable to explain it until he remembered that discordant thinking, relating to an entirely different subject, had been in his mind at the time.

Herein lies the possibility of perfect health; it needs only that men shall follow the rule. With the entire disappearance of those thoughts which produce disease, disease itself must disappear, and perfect health must follow.

This proposition is contrary to what has been the trend of thought for centuries, and therefore many abandon the subject without giving it due consideration. Then again, to others the conditions seem so simple that they do not see how it is possible that such important results should follow such simple causes; besides, perseverance is necessary to success, and few care to persevere. Exclusion of all discord is necessary, yet many think little things are not worthy the requisite attention and effort; and, for lack of that training which they might have had through the management of the little things, when they are confronted with the larger difficulties, they meet discouragement, if not failure. However, it still remains true that to attain to perfect health it is only necessary to stop thinking all discordant thoughts.

The impetuous restlessness of the American branch of the English race and the intensity of their activity are constantly spurring them on to "do something." That is one reason why they swallow such enormous quantities of drugs, even compelling their physicians to prescribe medicines when the physicians themselves are convinced that their patients would be better off without them. But here is a method of the opposite character. It does not require the doing of something, but the ceasing to do something—not activity, but rest. It is not to do, but to stop doing.

Laotze told his countrymen a half-truth which points to a whole truth, even if couched in the negative form, when he said: "By non-action there is nothing which may not be done." When right thinking is not interfered with by wrong thinking, the right acting will take care of itself. If a man ceases to think evil, he will cease to do evil, and right will prevail, because there is then not anything else for him to do. He who does not think about stealing cannot steal.

There is wisdom in the advice which that old Hebrew prophet gave the Israelites in their emergency: "Stand still and see [observe] the salvation of the Lord." They were not to do the work themselves, but only to stand and see it done. God's working is always toward the right. The persistent tendency of activity throughout all things in nature is toward purification. Stagnant water becomes impure; flowing water becomes pure unless impurities are constantly added. Even the Chicago drainage canal, bearing all the filth of that great city, purifies itself in a few miles so that at last even the chemist cannot detect any impurities.

The same is true of the human body. No sooner does an atom in the body become useless or injurious than, without any conscious attention on the part of the person, something goes to work to remove that atom from the system. See, in Gates's experiment, how soon the injurious substance evolved in the body as a consequence of anger was expelled through the breath. This is only a single instance among a vast multitude. Physiologists tell us that some injurious substances appear in the perspiration in less than a minute after they are swallowed. So strong is this tendency in the human body that when the offending object is of such a character that it cannot be removed, it often occurs, as in the case of a bullet, that a new and entirely distinct process is set up, and the object is enclosed by an impervious sheath which separates it from the surrounding tissues and prevents it from doing any harm to the system.

Even the old biblical writers recognized that the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the children only unto the third and fourth generation. So great is the natural tendency of all organized life toward purity! This universal tendency of all nature adds probability to the recognized possibility of final absolute purity, and holds out to man another strong encouragement to aid its accomplishment by acting in accord with these basic mental principles. Both mental and material creation conspires to the same end. If, then, men would stop discordant thinking and thereby cease generating impurities within themselves, how quickly the stream would run clear!

Why will not men aid this tendency by ceasing to plant within themselves the seeds of death and disease, and, instead, let their own harmonious thinking pour in great fresh streams of purity, health, and life? Even if the iniquities of the fathers do continue for three or four generations, they must sooner or later disappear as the filth disappears from the running water,



unless other impurities are continuously mingled with the stream of pure life which God gives to every one. Suffering is not the concomitant of life. There is no unavoidable necessity for it. Men are not always to suffer. They can, and they ultimately will, put away discordant thinking, which is the primal cause of all suffering.

A vision of the possibilities lying inherent in these principles makes the old story of the length of life before the deluge seem not altogether impossible. What might not come to man if he would let Nature have her own way and would cease pouring poison into himself in the form of discordant thinking? More than that, may there not be some additional method whereby man may, by compliance with other principles, entirely obviate the necessity of death and thus bring about a realization of the prophecy of Paul who says that the last enemy to be destroyed is death, thus indicating that death shall at last cease? Evidently God did not mean that men should be sick. Then He did not mean that they should die. Paul and the old prophet were right. "Death shall be swallowed up in victory."

## **THE WORRY HABIT**

### ***CHAPTER 25***

He who would stop discordant thinking must banish from his mind all anxiety for the future and "let the dead past bury its dead," for anxiety about the future is only another name for worry, and regret for things done in the past is its twin sister; both are distinctly antagonistic to all harmonious thinking.

In the literal meaning of the word there is a strong suggestion of the character and attendant conditions of the mental state which it designates. One of its old Anglo-Saxon ancestors, perhaps a grandparent, was used to indicate harm, while another was the name for a wolf, and in Iceland it was the name for an accused person. In our own times the word in its literalness means to choke, to suffocate, to bite at or tear with the teeth as dogs do when fighting, or when "worrying" rats or other small animals.

Metaphorically the word indicates a mental state fully the equivalent of the physical conditions included in its more literal meaning. In its milder phases it is disturbing, harassing, and harmful; while with its intenser forms it does indeed seize its victim by the throat, as a dog or a wolf might, and choke, and suffocate, and tear with its teeth. If we were to call worry into our consciousness as a person, its aspect would be so terrible that men would flee from it in horror.

The woman who said she "spent half her time doing things and the other half worrying because she had done them," belongs to a very numerous and a very uncomfortable family. To worry over, or regret, what is past is like rethreshing old straw. Time so spent is worse than wasted, for it does not change anything, it occupies valuable time, and no form of useful activity drains the life energies as this mental torture does. It robs one of sleep, sours the disposition, warps the judgment, and makes the mind weak and vacillating.

This is true of every form of anxiety or worry. It is a waste of strength, complete destruction of peace of mind, and one of the most disturbing elements which can invade a household. One individual with the worry habit can poison the atmosphere for all with whom he is associated, for mental discord is easily communicated, and others are made more or less miserable either by discordant sympathy or by condemnation.

Thus the seed is multiplied, for to condemn another or to give discordant sympathy by being "sorry for him" is to fall into the same kind of an error that he himself has committed. This contagious thinking should stop in its very beginning. That another is mentally disturbed is no excuse for one's own discordant thinking, and to yield to such an influence injures all concerned. As the weaver's shuttle passes from side to side of the loom, so thoughts pass from one to another, entangling many in their meshes and weaving the web of life in brightness or in gloom according as the thoughts are.

Anxiety and worry about the future have their beginning in uncertainty and doubt, and these soon develop into expectancy of evil with manifold visions of things that never happen. Here is the place where effort for the destruction of worry should begin. For illustration: A friend is on a journey. There steals into the mind a thought of uncertainty whether he will reach his destination and return in safety. Right here in this doubt is the parting of the ways. This first discordant thought, no matter how small, should be instantly dropped out of the mind as unreservedly as a stone may be dropped out of the hand. It can be done more easily right here at the outset than at any other point, and that will end all the trouble. If, instead of doing this, the doubt is allowed to continue and to expand, the discordant thoughts will increase to the same extent, and the discomfort will be exactly proportional.

Perhaps it occurs to the mind that accidents sometimes happen on the road. This thought increases the mental disturbance until finally the picture presents itself of some frightful affair once read about, and this is followed by a condition of worry which destroys all mental serenity and makes life miserable. It is useless to say to the worrier that his visions are entirely unreal. Probably he is aware of that fact, and yet he makes them as real to himself as any event that is passing, and his suffering is as actual and as harmful as any suffering.

This vice, for it is a vice, is so insidious in its approach, so positive in its assertions when it has once made a lodgment in the mind, and so persistent in its hold on its victim, that persuasion or entreaty from another is seldom of any avail. It is not enough to say to the person obsessed that not one traveler in millions is ever injured, nor is it enough to say that his fears have no foundation save in his own imagination, and that he has brought all his suffering on himself. Such declarations to the con-firmed mental inebriate rouse indignation which seriously increases the discord, and he justifies him-self by asserting that he cannot help worrying.

He can help it if he will. By his own act, with which another cannot interfere, he can avoid all the misery which worrying would bring into his whole life, as well as the misery which he may inflict on the lives of others. There is no occasion for it out-side the victim's own mind. His own thinking and that alone creates the disturbance, it has no existence outside of his own thinking, and a change of his thinking can destroy it.

Not all at once can he do this, perhaps, but he can do it by persistent endeavor. Back at the parting of the ways, when the thought of uncertainty first entered his mind, he might have given his thinking a healthy and harmonious direction by stopping the discordant thoughts which had been suggested by uncertainty and doubt.

He may not have noticed the little thought which began the series, or if he did, he probably considered it too trivial to be worthy of any attention, still less of any effort; yet it was just the kind of thinking which ought always to be terminated on the instant. To do that is all that is needed; and that done, the terrors which a fertile imagination might conjure up will never present themselves. It matters not whether it is worry about future possibilities or anxiety over things which have passed; at its very beginning is the place to assert one's right to be "kept in perfect peace."

Having decided that he cannot stop worrying, the victim makes no further effort, and the habit becomes more firmly

established with each surrender to its wiles and its tortures until he becomes as completely subject to its control as any victim is to either the morphine or the drink habit. The sense of self-pity because his "sympathetic nature" makes his sufferings greater than those of others increases with the habit, and the mental discord goes on generating its poison in its victim beyond the ability of his system to expel it, developing finally into some sluggish disease. When death follows no one calls it suicide, but it surely belongs to that class.

Worry has killed more people than all the hard work that was ever done. Booker Washington very correctly and soberly set forth its results in a single sentence: "I think I am learning more and more each year that all worry consumes, and to no purpose, just so much physical and mental strength that otherwise might be given to effective work." Hard work with a peaceful, harmonious mind will never kill any one; and when it is accompanied by serenity, hope, and joy, it builds up the system and prolongs existence instead of shortening it; but worry kills, and not to stop it is slow but certain suicide as well as the destruction of much of the joy in the lives of one's best and closest friends. The victims all know the discomfort of it, yet in many cases their failure to stop the worrying comes from disinclination to make the necessary effort.

Whatever the incident or condition which sets the worry thought into activity, the two are as distinct as one pebble from another. The incident is wholly external to the person. The thinking and the thought are entirely within the person. The thinker may have no power over the incident, but he need not concern himself about that; if he will assert himself, he may have complete power over his own thinking, to stop it or to allow it to go on.

The sooner and the more fully one recognizes that it is not the incident, but one's own thinking, which causes the trouble the better for him, because it will make his work of reform far less difficult. His dominion over his own thinking may be absolute, therefore he may set in motion a train of thoughts entirely distinct from those first suggested by the incident, and he may drive away the whole discordant troop as completely as he would burglars from his house or dogs from his sheepfold.

If one would make a careful and comprehensive examination of the circumstances which provoke discordant thinking, strictly confining himself to this examination and excluding all inharmonious thoughts, he would gain a knowledge of its cause which would enable him to avoid such thinking under all similar circumstances. Such a course will also stimulate mental action, will be helpful to him in all his relations to external circumstances, will be healthful in its action upon his entire system, generate life-giving products instead of poisonous ones, and will give him strength to fulfill the duties of each hour as they arise. Once started in the right way, he may go on through his whole life with an ever increasing recognition of better possibilities and greater powers.

There are no variations in this course of procedure except as the object varies, or as the thinking and its duration vary. As in all mental conditions, though the victim may have assistance from another, yet the real effort must be made within himself. This mental discipline cannot be begun too soon, nor can it be exercised upon too insignificant conditions. As soon as the milder, incipient stages of the disease are observed the remedy should be unhesitatingly applied with determination and vigor. It should be done in the same way if the disease has progressed into the more extreme conditions, and one must necessarily be one's own surgeon, cutting off the offending thoughts without the slightest hesitation until, by persistent repetition of the operation, he becomes his own master. Instead of paralyzing himself with the weak, self-indulgent thought that he cannot put out the worry, let him dismiss it as he would an unwelcome intruder into his privacy or an objectionable visitor to his home. Let him put up a sign over the entrance to his mind, "no loafers, beggars, nor thieves allowed here," and then relentlessly enforce the prohibition.

It will take a struggle at first, perhaps a square stand-up contest, perhaps a "seven years' war," as was that of our Revolution when the colonies won their freedom, but it will be worth the effort, however great that may be. To the person who excludes worry from his mind and destroys the mental habit the revolution will be more important than was that war to our nation. It means freedom, comfort, happiness, health, and the prolongation of life.

This training will do more than enable one to banish worry when it tries to invade the mind: it will establish such a mental condition that the discord will not begin, and the eggs that hatch the vultures of worry will never be laid. When the knowledge and practice of this method become universal, they will drive out all the "blue devils" that torment the imagination, exorcise all the "spiritual obsession" that was ever heard about, and prevent any further increase in the population of the insane asylums of the world.

## **BUSINESS SUCCESS**

### ***CHAPTER 26***

Avoidance of discordant thinking is of immense practical value in business affairs. The man who gives himself over to disappointment, regret, grief, anxiety, worry, or condemnation of himself or others, is not doing anything to forward his business, but he is consciously or unconsciously cultivating a mental condition which will destroy his ability to arrive at correct conclusions and to act upon them promptly and efficiently; therefore, he is either hindering or misdirecting the operations necessary to success, and is wasting his mental and physical strength on injurious activity.

All discordant thinking should be stopped at once, and that energy which has been expended in destructive discord should be directed into productive channels. Let him care-fully examine the situation, and use every mental effort in making and prosecuting plans for success, without allowing for a moment the thought of possible defeat to paralyze his energies. This is the advantage held by each one who has previously trained himself in the exclusion of discordant thinking. One who has not done this should begin that training at once. It all lies with himself, and it is never too late to begin.

Herein is the difference between the man of twenty or thirty and the one of fifty. If the older man meets reverses, he seldom recovers himself. The younger man, full of hope and confidence, but with-out experience and ignorant of the difficulties ahead of him, does not even expect them, but as one by one they appear, fearlessly meets and overcomes them. The older man has experienced all these difficulties, foresees them all, is staggered by his vision of their united magnitude, and supinely allows his own discordant anticipations to frighten him out of making an effort; and yet, except for this, the older man has great advantages over the younger because of knowledge derived from his larger experience with men and things. If the younger man could add to his fearlessness the wisdom of the older one, there is little that could stand before him; and if the older man would divest himself of his doubts, and fears, and anxieties, and would use all his energy and wisdom in meeting the difficulties which he foresees, and which, foreseeing, he can the better cope with, he might snatch a brilliant success from the very jaws of defeat.

The world laughs at the confidence of ignorant youth, but that very confidence, which is really the absence of discordant anticipations, is in itself one great reason for his success. The world may well weep over that degeneration in the older person which arises from his fear of future dangers and difficulties. The younger man overcomes the defects of ignorance

by his harmonious thinking which is unmodified by fear of danger, while the older man, notwithstanding his superior wisdom and ability, is defeated by his own discordant thinking.

Herein is a large part of the reason why egotistic persons with only a fair share of ability so often succeed where others of greater ability fail. Their own confidence creates an atmosphere which in-spires others with confidence in them and their plans, and, therefore, they receive assistance which helps them to achieve success where those fail who lack that trait. Men often succeed by the very impetus of their own self-confidence, that is, by the power of their harmonious thoughts and the absence of self-distrust and self-condemnation; while others with far greater ability signally fail for no reason except their own hesitation and fear, born of doubt of themselves. In these two lines of thinking lie two important elements of success or failure. There is neither necromancy nor other mystery connected with it. He who gives up his mind to be preyed upon by doubt, fear, and irresolution is inviting his own defeat and is himself ministering to it, but he who resolutely dismisses all such thoughts is taking the necessary first step toward success.

The man who delivers himself over to discordant thinking is doing the same kind of thing, only in a different way, that the other person does who wastes his time and benumbs his faculties with intoxicants. Many a man has sunk into uselessness, become a burden to his friends and himself, a blot on the name of humanity, solely because he has allowed discordant thoughts to have possession of his mind. Death and insanity find their causes, immediate and remote, in the thinking which men have indulged in.

The man [seeking employment](#), who allows himself to be a prey to despair or other discordant thinking, unwittingly stamps upon his features and moulds into his form and actions peculiarities which those who otherwise would desire his services at once recognize as reasons for refusing his application. But if those thoughts are cut off as an excrescence would be, and if the mind is filled with that hope, expectancy, and confidence which come from the thought that success is deserved and will be achieved, the gait, the attitude, the glance of the eye, the whole man become transformed, and success seeks him as earnestly as he is seeking success.

It is related that a boy entered a place of business and told the proprietor that his sign, " Boy Wanted," had fallen down. "Well," responded the man, "why didn't you hang it up again?" "Because you don't want one now. I'm the boy you wanted." Whether the story is true or not, it illustrates the confidence which follows the absence of fear, doubt, and their attendant uncertainties, and which is a strong element of success.

It is not enough that the exclusion of discordant thinking shall be done only at the moment of necessity. It should be the continuous mental habit, the result of careful mental training. The stamp of any habitual mental condition cannot be entirely removed on the instant, but each person may al-ways keep his mind in the right condition, and then its physical expression will correspond, and there will not be the other outward appearances to need removal or control.

Before any man dismisses as "nonsense" this theory of business success through correct and harmonious thinking, let him analyze his own mental habits and compare the results in his business with his varying mental conditions. Let him observe on which days he has done his best work, with the least expenditure of vitality - those filled with cheer and hope and courage, or those in which doubt and despondency held sway. On which days have those associated with him responded best to his wishes? When have things moved most harmoniously? If every man will thus get acquainted with himself and the results of his own mental attitude, he will recognize ample reason why it is no longer good business policy to waste his energy and destroy his efficiency by discordant thinking.

But what if failure should come after strict adherence to this rule of mental control —of what advantage has it been to him who fails? This is his advantage: he remains perfectly poised, his judgment clear, his courage undaunted, his faith in ultimate success unshaken; he is neither a nervous nor a physical wreck, but, instead, is all ready to make a new beginning and to profit by his past mistakes.

### **UNDIVIDED ATTENTION**

#### ***CHAPTER 27***

What precedes shows clearly the method for securing that undivided attention which is so essential to success in all kinds of work, whether mental or physical. "Mind your business" is a wise injunction, even if blunt. It is all embraced in the advice to dismiss all thoughts other than those which pertain exclusively to that which is in hand at the particular moment.

The accountant who allows his mind to wander to other subjects when adding a column of figures cannot do his work so rapidly or so accurately as the one who shuts out all thoughts except those connected with his work. He must cease thinking of other things and think only of his addition. It must be one thing at a time. The ability to exclude one kind of thoughts from the mind enables one to exclude any thought, therefore practice in the exclusion of discordant thoughts will be an efficient preparation for success in avoiding all thoughts which do not pertain to the work immediately in hand.

When the accountant is in the middle of a long column of figures, perhaps his employer asks him a question. He should have so trained himself in the control of his thinking that on the instant he can shut out of his mind all thought of the work he was doing when the question was asked, think of nothing else but the subject proposed, and answer the question as completely as though he had never thought of his addition. Then, in its turn, that subject, when he is done with it, should be dropped out of his mind completely, and he should return to the work he was doing when interrupted, with a similar exclusion of all else but thoughts of the work in hand.

Such changes should always be accomplished without allowing irritation, impatience, anger, or other discordant thinking because of the interruption. The accountant's time is his employer's, his business is to do the work required by his employer, and whether his employer chooses to set him at one branch of work or another does not concern the employee. Many a clerk, because of occurrences like this, has habitually allowed some form of irritation to take such possession of his mind as to interfere seriously with his mental ability, ruin his efficiency, and destroy his health. This has caused many a nervous breakdown which was charged to over-work or hard work when its cause was not the work at all, but was solely the frequent irritation —some-thing which the clerk himself might have wholly avoided without any change of action on the part of his employer.

What has been said is true of every occupation and applies to activities of all kinds. The essential condition is that, although nothing may be over-looked or omitted, there should be one thing in the mind at one time —and no more. The mental ability to do this can be attained by the practice already advocated, and the method can be applied to all occupations.

The attention (attention is thinking) should be directed to the one thing that a person is doing to the total exclusion of everything else, whether the work is simple or complicated. If complicated, the attention should be fixed successively on

each element of the complication to the exclusion for the time of all the others. When the first item of the series is completed, let it immediately become a thing of the past, because the mind ought to be fully and exclusively occupied with the next; and so on successively, each in its order, omitting none. If thoughts of other things besides the work in hand are allowed to enter the mind, some point in the execution of the work is liable to be overlooked or perhaps forgotten entirely. The mind cannot successfully attend to two things at once, for a part of the mind can never accomplish as much as the whole, and divided attention always causes inefficiency in some direction. In mental or physical labor the principle is the same, because mental action is at the basis of the whole, and therefore the rule is the same for both.

As in the mental so in the physical, it is only through successful control of the smaller and more minute or apparently insignificant things that ability is gained to grapple with the greater or more abstract and general affairs. This is because the physical action depends on the mental and is caused by it. In every walk of life without exception, and in every period of its course, control of the thinking is of the greatest value and importance. The earlier this control is attained the better, but it is never too late to begin.

Sometimes an almost unnoticed but continuous and persistent undercurrent of some kind of thinking entirely foreign to the work in hand divides and receives more or less of the attention. This may appear in any one of a thousand forms, having originated in some incident or condition of large or small importance which, for some indefinite reason or apparently for no reason at all, has fastened itself strongly upon the mind.

Often this vaguely noticed thought is more difficult to exclude from the attention than one more consciously present, but its presence is a continuous menace to undivided attention; for, panther-like, it stands ready to spring into prominence through the slightest opening of circumstance. When the mind is directly engaged, it makes little difference whether it is mere revelry, listlessness, or vagueness which detracts from the attention. The result will be the same. Whatever the character of the intruder, success is gained only by its complete exclusion.

Such a course of procedure as here indicated may be called concentration of the mind upon the particular subject in hand, but concentration is usually accompanied by consciousness of more or less strenuous mental effort, and, as has already been set forth, this mental exclusion should be accomplished without effort—simply by letting go of all thoughts except those directly required for the prosecution of the work. Insomuch as there is stress and strain, there is instituted a second line of discordant thinking running alongside of the one whose exclusion is desired, and this gives the mind a double duty to perform, thus defeating the object sought by the very effort to accomplish it.

### **IMPORTANCE OF EARLY TRAINING**

#### ***CHAPTER 28***

The importance of the early education of children is well understood, because it is recognized that the early training lasts longest and most strongly influences life and character. A modern writer has only echoed the opinion of all careful observers when he says: "More that is elementary—a key to all the rest—is learned in the cradle and beside the mother's chair than in all after time." And a great religious organization is said to hold that if it can have the direction of the young life for its first seven years it cares little who has it afterward.

Every one who has learned the value of the suggestions set forth in these pages, whether through his own experience in their practical application or through his observation of others, has also learned that much pain, suffering, difficulty, and perhaps disaster might have been avoided if he had been taught these things early in life. Recognition of the advantages derived from such teaching takes one back to the earliest days of childhood and suggests many thoughts of lost possibilities.

He who attempts to instruct along these lines often hears exclamations like these: "What if I had been told when a child!" "Oh, if all children were only taught this! How it would save them, as it would have saved me!" The world only half recognizes the importance of the very earliest training. The child even when in the cradle may be taught. "As the twig is bent the tree is inclined," and the earlier the bending, the more easily is it done.

Painful or disastrous experiences in hard places are not necessary, and they would not have to be endured if, before the time of their occurrence, the proper instruction had been given and received. The child need not burn itself in order to avoid the hot stove, because it may be so instructed by the wise parent that it will avoid the stove without the painful experience. Similarly, in later years, the person need not have the suffering and disease nor the vice and immorality which arise from erroneous thinking, if the proper early instruction has been given.

Without knowing it, the mother is acting in compliance with great fundamental principles when she directs the crying infant's attention to something different from the cause of its trouble in order that the object of the crying may be forgotten. This change of thought by change of external suggestion is exactly what the physician expects when he sends his patients to new scenes and surroundings. The change of scene induces a change in thinking, and in that way the infirmity is healed. He is merely repeating the mother method.

It is only needed to teach the child to make such mental changes himself while in the midst of the circumstances and suggestions that cause the trouble. This can be done by repeatedly calling the child's attention to what happens when some one else diverts his attention from the cause of his discord, and showing him how he can do the same thing himself without the intervention of another. Such instruction is really cultivation of that most desirable attainment, self-control, because each such incident is really a practical lesson in the art. The importance of this method and its great advantages over abrupt and violent arbitrary command have seldom been fully understood or appreciated. One is along right lines, inviting and receiving the cooperation of the child. The other is wrong in principle and invariably arouses opposition and resistance. One makes. The other literally breaks.

Practical instruction in accordance with the true principles can begin just as soon as the little one has recognized his own thinking, and this occurs much earlier than is usually supposed. Let the intelligent adult turn backward in memory to the time when he first recognized what it is to think. If he has not done this before, he will be surprised to recall how young he was when this experience first came to him.

The wise parent can by right suggestion easily make this date much earlier than it otherwise would be. Then, along with the injunctions not to do this or that, can come the similar injunction not to think of the disturbing thing, but to think of something else. If begun early enough, it is little more difficult to teach a child not to think certain thoughts than to teach it not to perform certain acts. Thus in earliest life the most desirable mental habits may be established, and the foundation may be laid for most valuable elements of character.

There is no need of complicating the child's conditions with the large amount of contributing information which the adult often



requires before his mind is satisfied of the accuracy of a proposition. That can come later. The child naturally accepts the parental assertion without question, and instruction can be reduced to its very simplest form, Experience will bring all the rest, and with each experience the habit will become more firmly established.

Very early the child's observation can be directed to the great though simple fact that thinking comes first and that without thinking there will not be any action. Important as this statement is, it is so simple that it is entirely within the possibilities of the child's comprehension, and an understanding of this fact will greatly emphasize the parental instruction.

All that will then be needed is cultivation of the moral qualities and an explanation of their relation to the thinking and acting, which should be a part of the training of every child. Of course there must be with this, as there is with all instruction of children, the frequent and patient repetition of precept, explanation, and example. In any kind of training of young or old it is line upon line and precept upon precept. This education cannot begin too soon, nor can it be prosecuted too assiduously.

In this mental training of the child there is a wide field for the parent and an equally wide one for the kindergartner and the primary teacher, and indeed for all teachers; but the secure foundation ought to be laid before the young life comes in contact with those who are called more advanced instructors. Instruction and practice must necessarily continue until perfect control of the mental processes has been gained, and the last trace of erroneous or discordant thinking has disappeared. Noting less than this should be the object of either child or adult.

Training and education because of the child should begin even earlier than this. Since thinking is the initial action among human actions, it follows that the thought of the mother before the child is born is a formative thought which, to a large extent, decides the mental conditions and character of the infant. Both observation and experiment show that our basic proposition applies here with the same force as elsewhere, though physical changes are inoperative. The mental alone is efficacious. Mutilations do not affect anything beyond the one mutilated.

The Chinese have compressed the feet of their girl babies for centuries, yet the girls are born with feet capable of normal development. But the physical type of any race is not any more persistent than their mental characteristics; indeed, their physical peculiarities change with changed mental conditions. The ancient Greeks attained their beautiful bodily configuration by controlling the mental habits of the mothers, and by thus influencing the [physical development](#) of children they controlled that of the whole people. Their object was beauty of form. How much more important and valuable are correct mental and moral characteristics !

The mother, by control of her own thinking, can make what she will of her unborn child. Here in the very beginning of the new life is greater need, greater opportunity, and greater advantage to the child, than the future holds, for the foundation is being laid. But this depends for its success upon the power which the mother herself already possesses through her control of her own mental actions.

Both parents have their part here, and therefore both should be ready for doing the appropriate work in the best way; hence they should themselves be already in possession of thorough mental discipline and self-control. This means years of previous self-training for both, but it also means a more advantageous start in life for the child and a better outlook for its future prosperity and success. It also means a better nation and a better race.

In view of these facts the statement of Dr. Holmes that the training of a child should begin three hundred years before its birth does not seem an exaggeration. An incentive for all young persons to maintain energetically and efficiently the cultivation and practice of mental control lies in the fact that by so doing they are preparing themselves to usher into existence better children, more fully equipped for their places in the world. Thus they are benefiting not only themselves but those who are to be dearer to them than their own lives. President Hall sums up the whole in a very terse and true declaration: "Every experience of body or soul bears on heredity, and the best life is that which is best for the unborn." That which is truly best for one is really best for all.

The grand possibilities for improvement which this opens up for the person, and through the person for the race, are incalculable. The method is simple. Here as much as anywhere, perhaps more than anywhere else, appear the value and influence of the right mental action of each in its effect on others and on the world at large.

### **THREE NOTABLE EXAMPLES**

#### **CHAPTER 29**

Napoleon Bonaparte possessed most remarkable control of his thinking, which enabled him to exclude from his mind completely all those thoughts which he chose, and thus not only devote his entire attention to the one subject in hand, but even seemingly to make himself over into another personage.

It is claimed that he was naturally humane, generous, and sympathetic. If this be true, then he could effectually dismiss all such thoughts from his mind, because he could become as hard as steel. At one time he seemed dominated by one set of ideas, and by another set at another time. He was, in-deed, so changeable as to puzzle not only his biographers, but the world. So complete were his changes that his admirers are uncertain which was the real man.

The probability is that one was as real as the other, because his own statements indicate that these peculiarities were the result of in-tended change of thinking as the circumstances of his judgment dictated. "He compared his mind to a chest of drawers, where each subject occupied its separate space. In turn he opened each drawer. No one subject got mixed with another. When all the drawers were shut he fell asleep. Of course this was not literally true, but during his best years it came as near being literally true as is possible to the human brain."

In his life there were many instances of this perfect control of his own thinking. When his preparations had been made and his troops were engaged in battle, if all was going as he had planned, he could slumber peacefully while the most horrible carnage was in progress. He did this repeatedly. At Jena he slept on the ground while the battle raged. At Austerlitz, after his arrangements had been completed, he slept in the straw of a hut as peacefully as an infant. These things were possible only through his great mental control; and though there is much in his career that cannot be commended and should not be emulated, yet his mental control was most admirable. He is one of the great examples of what can be accomplished by this means, and every one may profitably pattern after him in this respect.

George W. Smalley, writing of Gladstone, says: "If Mr. Gladstone had one mental characteristic more distinctly marked than another, it was his power of absolutely excluding any given subject from his mind and concentrating his whole intellectual energy on some other subject. Always, what-ever it was, one at a time. In the same way he could and would exclude all subjects when the time came for rest."

In the same article he quotes what Mr. Gladstone says of himself: "Of course it has been an anxious life. I have had to make

many decisions of the highest importance in public affairs. I have given weighed arguments and facts, and made up my mind as best I could, and then dismissed the subject. I have had to make a great many speeches, and have made them as well as I knew how, and then an end. But if, after I had taken a decision or made a speech, I had begun to worry over it and to say to myself, 'Perhaps I ought to have given greater weight to this or that fact, or did not fully consider this or that argument, or might have put this consideration more fully in my speech, or turned this sentence better, or made a stronger appeal to my audience' —if I had done this instead of doing my best while I could and then totally dismissing the matter from my mind, I should have been in my grave twenty years ago."

Jacob Riis says in his story of President Roosevelt: "The faculty of forgetting all else but the topic in hand is one of the great secrets of his success in whatever he has undertaken as an official. It is the faculty of getting things done. They tell stories yet, that go around the board of class dinners, of how he would come into a fellow- student's room for a visit, and, picking up a book, would become immediately and wholly absorbed in its contents, then wake up with a guilty start to confess that his whole hour was gone, and hurry away. In all the wild excitement of the closing hours of the convention that set him in the vice-president's chair, he, alone, in an inner room, was reading Thucydides, says Albert Shaw, who was with him. He was resting. I saw him pick up a book in a lull in the talk the other day, and instantly forget all things else."

## THE PENALTY FOR SIN

### **CHAPTER 30**

Although exclusion of discordant thinking carries with it avoidance of discordant physical conditions, let it not be imagined that the sinner, by the exclusion from his mind of such thoughts as sorrow, regret, remorse, and self- condemnation, can escape the rightful penalty for his deeds. His sinful course is itself discordant and produces its own discordant consequences from which there is no escape except by abandoning it.

Each discordant condition has its own consequences, and the exclusion of one of those conditions from the mind does not bring avoidance of the consequences of the others. It is true that a man may avoid all the suffering which might be caused by regret if he will exclude regret from his mind, but that would not in the slightest relieve him of the suffering which the commission of sin has already caused.

It may be said that the suffering occasioned by remorse for acts committed is directly attributable to those acts themselves, for had there not been any such acts, there would not have been any such thoughts. Grant this; but each discordant thought brings its own punishment, and the sinner would have no more suffering from such thoughts than would the virtuous person who, laboring under the mistake that he has acted wrongly, gives himself up to thinking of this kind.

A case in point is that of a clergyman of upright and exemplary life and character who in some way became possessed by the erroneous idea that he had committed the unpardonable sin. His remorse and despair were extreme, and he sank into his grave, a victim of the discordant thoughts which were provoked by his hallucination. It cannot be said that his suffering and death were the result of his sin, because he had not sinned; they were the result of his discordant thinking.

Of course, in the case of the sinful man, as with the innocent, suffering may be occasioned by grief, regret, remorse, and the like, and it may be avoided by avoiding such thinking; but that erroneous thinking which culminates in what is called sin is discordant in and of itself alone, and out of these discordant conditions must come their legitimate discordant results independent of whatever may arise from any other source and in addition to it.

This discordant thinking and acting is a class by itself, and its results must stand in a class by themselves; therefore, though a man may banish all other discordant thinking and acting and thus avoid their consequences, yet he will still have the discord caused by his sinning, and he cannot escape its results.

Though such a man may present the appearance of health and strength, yet his error will surely find him out. One need not flatter himself that he can evade the penalty of a single evil, sinful, or discord-ant thought or action, by harmonious thinking and pure conduct in all other particulars. The penalty for the single violation can no more be avoided than can the greater penalty when all the thoughts and actions are discordant.

Thinking produces actions like itself; the error thought not only perpetuates itself but develops and enlarges its own error, and sooner or later suffering of some kind follows. It is as inevitable as that consequences follow causes. One must put away all sinful thinking and acting if he would escape all penalty. Banished discord does not leave any sting in its trail, but just so far as it is indulged it will surely bear its bitter fruit.

The deed that is done is beyond recall; the word that is spoken cannot be unsaid; the thought that has flashed across the horizon of the mind has left its image, like that of lightning across the sky, and each has shot its consequences into the future. There is nothing more inevitable than these consequences, whether for good or for evil.

The good result from the good is just as sure as the bad result from the bad; nature works with absolute impartiality; it rests with each man to decide which it shall be, good or evil. The world may never see the consequences of a man's act; his most intimate friends may not suspect it; he may not himself connect his condition with it; but the consequence is inevitable.

Neither the world, nor the man's enemies, nor his intimates, need to trouble themselves; he will surely reap the consequences of his conduct. Men, whether friends or enemies, are always too prone to condemn; but, whatever their opinion, their condemnation can be neither right nor wise; nor is it needed to bring about the results which are justly due. Those who indulge in condemnation may have no compunctions about it and may think it is deserved by the culprit, yet such thinking is itself discordant, and the penalty for discordant thinking will never fail to reach him who sits in judgment on another.

Even the libertine and the murderer who are never found out, and those who escape punishment by legal process, will get the just reward for their course. Though the man who commits a wrong may, in his own mind, justify himself for it, or, because of erroneous thinking, may even have the opinion that he has done an admirable act, yet his course will finally bring down upon him its consequences in some form of suffering or deprivation though it be nothing more than the condition of not knowing, not understanding, and thus not receiving and not having those desirable qualities or things which otherwise would have been his. While such deprivations may be considered mild punishment, yet who can measure their extent or their importance; and who shall judge?

The punishment inflicted by man upon his brother man is of the same general character, for it consists almost wholly in depriving the condemned person of what would otherwise belong to him and be enjoyed by him. What else is a fine but depriving a man of property; or imprisonment but depriving him of freedom; or the extreme penalty of the law book depriving him of his life? In one way or another, part or all of these will come to the erring man without the intervention of another; and

with them will come many other conditions which no one else could inflict upon him. Of vastly more importance than all else is the loss of those mental and moral qualities which the wrong-doer, by his own action, deprives himself of. He finds indeed that "the wages of sin is death" – death to all his nobler and higher instincts.

For centuries the fear of hell has been considered a restraint on the wicked; but the punishment here noted is more unerring and more certain. There is not any postponement to an indefinite future nor is there any way of escape. It has its beginning in the very act itself, even in the thought which produced the act, just as the plant exists in the seed, the cause in its consequence. The man who lies must tell a dozen more to cover that one, and will always be haunted by the fear of being found out. Thus the error becomes its own punishment, which is from within itself and is in the form of more and greater error.

The consequence must in every case be exactly adjusted to its cause, therefore the punishment must be exactly proportioned to the guilt. The scales of natural justice are always balanced with even fidelity. Gravitation is not more steadfast. Indeed, error is the gravitation of morals, but it does not have a stopping-place as the falling stone has. It is itself the bottomless pit. It is its own destiny, ordained and unchangeable. Principle never changes; causation never falters nor wavers. Paradoxical as it may seem, the way of escape from punishment is included in this unwavering inviolability of principle which punishes so relentlessly.

There is forgiveness for the evil, but only in the entire abandonment of the evil course of acting, speaking, or thinking. Their continuance, or the continuance of either of them, is the continuance of the cause, and that is the inexorable and sure continuance of their consequences; but it is the cause which produces the consequences, and if the cause is not allowed to exist, there will not be any consequences. The seed of the thistle need not be planted, and then there will not be any thistles; but even if it has been planted and has already sprung up, it may be cut down and its roots may be dug out so as to exterminate it completely.

## **A STORY AND ITS LESSONS**

### ***CHAPTER 31***

Avoidance of discordant thinking is of great social as well as personal advantage to the one who has attained it. It is a mild power, but it is of tremendous effectiveness.

Whether we know it or not, we always arouse thoughts in others similar to those which fill our own minds. Anger in one person provokes anger in others, and love begets love. Fear brings fear, and confidence inspires confidence. The cheerfulness of one person will pervade a roomful, and if persisted in it may extend to a whole neighborhood. Even the most retiring and least assertive have their influence upon others far beyond their own recognition.

Intention does not alone control the impression made upon another, because there may be a difference between its character and the method of its execution which may produce a result contrary to that intended; besides, there may be some strong dominant thought in the background which is quite different from the intention. Mere possession of this positive thought, without any effort or desire on the part of the thinker, affects and influences others, and the more earnest or positive the thought, the more efficacious will it be, and the more certain and definite will be the result. It does not need any intention to influence others, but only the earnest desire on the part of the thinker himself to be right and to think right.

A teacher in one of the public schools of Boston had an assistant assigned to her in her school-room. This threw two strangers into close relationship during the school hours of every day. They soon found that they were each in such a mental condition that if either made a suggestion or expressed an opinion it disturbed or irritated the other. The mental disturbance or irritation thus aroused was a mild form of anger, though each would have preferred to call it by some other name. This was of such frequent occurrence that it colored the whole day. After mature deliberation the teacher decided not to allow this mental disquiet in herself. She resolved to stop thinking the discordant or angry thoughts, however slight they might be.

The opportunity to put her resolution into effect came very soon after it was made. The assistant said something which irritated her. Affairs in the room were in such a condition that she could sit at one of the desks and labor with herself in the attempt to stop her own discordant thinking. During the effort she did not try in any way to influence the assistant; indeed, she did not once think of doing so. Her attempt was to change her own mental condition and to cleanse her own mind of all discordant thinking. Her work was with herself alone.

She found that it required more effort and occupied a longer time than she had anticipated, but this only intensified her determination to set herself right. After a while she experienced the pleasure of success. The discordant thoughts all disappeared and harmonious ones took their places. A delightful revulsion of feeling followed. A harmonious glow filled her whole being, and she rejoiced that she had triumphed over her own discordant thinking.

She sat in her place a little longer in order more firmly to establish her present mental condition and to fortify herself against a return of the discordant thinking, as well as to enjoy the pleasure of her present satisfaction, when something occurred which greatly surprised her. The assistant came and sat down beside her, took her hand in a half-caressing way as it lay upon the desk, and, in a tone of voice which she had never recognized from her before, asked about something which was going on in the schoolroom. The discord had also ceased in the assistant's mind, and harmony had taken its place. The division between them was healed.

Seemingly this was a little incident, but it is important because it illustrates an important principle of mental action which is always at work between people who are thrown into close relationship with each other. By her earnest work with herself to stop her own discordant thinking, the teacher had changed the condition of her own mind, and, without any intention or even thought about it on her own part, this change had so affected the assistant as to work a mental revolution in her mind also. The close relationship between minds is such that when the teacher had recovered her own mental poise the assistant, without conscious thought or intention, regained hers also. Such is the effect of banishing discordant thoughts from one's own mind and introducing positive and harmonious ones in their places.

The old saying that it takes two to quarrel is true, and it is equally true that the mental relationship between man and man is such that it takes two to be angry. If one of the angry parties ejects all discordant thinking from himself and waits without impatience or any other kind of discordant thinking, the anger of the other one must stop of itself. It has nothing to feed upon.

In the case of the teacher and her assistant it is certain that there was discordant thinking; perhaps at first it was only on the part of one (it is of no consequence which), but it communicated itself to the other, increasing as time went on, and it continued until one of them assumed positively the right mental attitude for herself, and then it ceased with the other.

This incident suggests the course to be pursued in all misunderstandings or quarrels. The one who recognizes the situation should at once set his own mind at peace, sweeping it clear of all discordant thoughts concerning the attendant actions and conditions, regardless of their character and without any question of how or where they originated or who was to blame; this done, he should in every particular keep his mind in a condition of perfect harmony toward the other – and wait. Waiting will do the rest. "They also serve who only stand and wait;" and especially is this the case if, in addition to the waiting, they maintain the right mental condition.

Unless it comes about naturally and without effort there should not be any verbal attempt at reconciliation. Very often the best-intentioned predetermined efforts of this kind fail of success. Complete control of one's own mind in such cases will never fail. This does not mean that when one finds he has done wrong, he must not say so to the one he has wronged: but even this is not advisable until the confession can be made with-out the slightest discordant stir in himself. Discord in one person rouses it in another, and even allusion to the subject which has once caused in harmony may arouse it again.

It should be expressly noted that in the case just cited the teacher did not do the work in herself for the purpose of affecting the assistant, nor for any other but the one sole object of making herself right. This mental attitude is of first importance. To purify one's own self for the sake of purifying others is commendable, but it is not so praiseworthy as when undertaken with the single object of correcting one's own faults. It will then better affect and assist others than if it were undertaken for that object. It is only with one's own self that one has to deal - never interfering with another unless assistance is asked.

When there has been anger between two people, for one of them to undertake by word or deed to set the other right would frustrate all the good intentions in the world unless the one who attempts it has already first completely accomplished it in himself. Even then success may be very doubtful. Indeed, just here is where grave mistakes are often made in trying to solve any social problem. Every person is prone to lay the blame on another and then to try to make that other one right instead of turning his whole attention to correcting the error in himself. Correction of the other person by one of the parties to a quarrel is impossible in nine cases out of ten, and especially is this true when the discordant thought of condemnation exists in the mind of the one who makes the attempt.

Epictetus was right when he declared: "However he treats me, I am to act rightly with regard to him; for the one is my own concern, the other is not." Acting and thinking are so closely allied that this rule applies as much to the one as to the other. It is a maxim of the soundest philosophy that nothing another does can ever make it right for me to do wrong, because wrong is never right, and no combination of circumstances can ever make it so.

When the teacher had removed the discord from her own mind, she discovered that it had disappeared from the assistant's also. Had she attempted to correct the assistant's error instead of correcting her own, the discord might never have been healed. Although the assistant's action was set in motion by what the teacher did, yet the assistant's thinking and acting were her own and not the teacher's. Another's thoughts become our own only when we accept them as ours. Reformation is at last one's own work.

In fact, as seen in the principle set forth in these pages, each can reform only one person in the world, and that one is himself. However much the suggestion to reform may come from another, yet all reformation is essentially self-reformation, because all thinking is one's own thinking, and thinking is the causative power. This does not exclude assisting some one else when assistance is asked for, nor does it prohibit extending all good feeling and brotherly love to others. Indeed, the underlying principle requires this, because otherwise one's own mind cannot be in a harmonious condition; but the work is, after all, one's own work with one's own self. When he has cast out the beam from his own eye, then shall he see clearly to cast out the mote from his brother's eye; but in the process of removing the beam he will most probably have effected the removal of the mote also, and therefore he shall then see that there is nothing to be removed from the eye of his brother.

### **THE STORY OF A CONTRACT**

#### **CHAPTER 32**

A man whom we will call Smith because that is not his name had a contract with a carpenter to build a house. When the work was about half done, the carpenter came and said that he was in distress because of certain financial obligations which were about to mature, and that he would be greatly accommodated if he could have immediately all the money that would be due him when the house should be completed. Smith had the money in the bank and gave it to him. All went well until the house was very nearly done. Then the carpenter left it and went to other work, much to Smith's disadvantage.

Several weeks passed, and, as there was no indication that anything further would be done on the house, Smith sent to the carpenter and asked when he was going to finish his work. The reply came back that he had done all he intended to do on the house and, besides, he was too mad to talk about it; whereupon Smith got angry, too, but upon consideration he decided to make a practical test of the principles which were so successfully followed by the teacher.

He put out of himself all anger and condemnation of the carpenter, as well as all other discordant thoughts, so that he was able without mental discord to review the whole transaction, his favor to the carpenter, the disadvantage of the delay, and even the rudeness of the reply to his inquiry. Then he went to see the carpenter. When he met him and saw the muscles of his face stiffen and his whole countenance harden as he looked up, even that did not rouse any discordant thinking in Smith's mind, so thoroughly was he under the right mental control. They immediately began talking about the unfinished work, and in less than ten minutes the carpenter, without being requested to do so, offered to go back and finish his job. Smith told him that he might send one of his workmen, but he insisted on going himself. The carpenter went and did all the work required, including some extras which he cheerfully declined to accept pay for.

The effective consideration in this case was the successful effort that Smith made to clear his own mind from discord. As in the case of the teacher, here was also an entire absence of any attempt to influence the carpenter by any mental means whatsoever. No one's rights were assailed or interfered with in the slightest. There was nothing concealed or underhanded. There was no compulsion or attempt at compulsion. All the influence Smith exercised over the carpenter was in a fair, face-to-face, open conversation, with only harmony in his own mind behind his words. The result was much pleasanter and far more successful than any attempt at compulsion could have been.

Indeed, any such attempt, accompanied as it would have been by recrimination and angry words, would have intensified the carpenter's feelings and defeated Smith's object. Where anger has ruled, expensive lawsuits have grown out of incidents of far less importance. It was much cheaper than a lawsuit would have been in the expenditure of both money and energy of every kind, to say nothing of the long train of evils arising from hostile feelings. Nothing is necessary in a dispute except that one of the parties shall put away all discordant thinking.



Perhaps some one may claim inability to do as Smith did under such conditions, and that may be true; but every one can do it on occasions of less importance; and if he does not let any incident slip, but accomplishes the exclusion of his discordant thinking in each one of the smaller affairs, he will soon be able to do the same thing in the gravest and most important situations. As an illustration of how business may be conducted successfully, this incident has its lesson. If this plan were followed by everybody, one large and important class in the community would change its occupation for a more productive one.

The same principle is illustrated in a dispute which occurred over the boundary line between two pieces of property. The owner of one piece claimed that the fence was in the wrong place and should be removed so as to include in his own tract quite a strip of the land of his neighbor. Angry feelings and discordant thinking resulted. A lawsuit grew out of it and dragged along for years. Each asserted that he cared very little for the land, but insisted he was contending for a principle. The quarrel grew and prospered with small prospect of settlement until one of the parties was tired out and sold his land to get rid of the difficulties.

The purchaser was the very reverse of quarrelsome, and all who knew the circumstances wondered that he had bought property encumbered with a lawsuit. His action showed his wisdom. At the first favorable opportunity he approached the claimant and after a few pleasant words asked him where he believed the fence ought to be. The claimant pointed out the place very carefully. When this had been definitely fixed, the new owner said: "If you will move the fence to that place, I will pay half the expense of the removal, since it is a line fence." The claimant was surprised. He had been met by a man who had only harmony in his heart and was overcome by it. The fence continues to stand in its old place, the lawsuit is dismissed, and the two men are fast friends.

Such is the power of non-resistance when combined, as it always should be, with harmonious mental conditions in the mind of one of the parties to a quarrel.

### **THE STORY OF A NOTE**

#### ***CHAPTER 33***

A gentleman borrowed five hundred dollars of a widow, giving his note. Soon afterward her eldest son got into trouble of such a kind that the penitentiary was in prospect for him. The borrower investigated the situation, and found that the young man had done wrong, but that the action was without criminal intention. Older and designing persons had taken advantage of his inexperience and had made him a tool for the execution of their own illegal purposes.

The borrower used his influence in the proper way, saved the young man from disaster, and set him on his feet. Warned and instructed by this experience, he made a man of himself. Not very long afterward the second son of the widow fell into serious, though not so grave, difficulties, and the borrower extricated him also from his dilemma. In the meantime the note was not paid because the man was not able, and, too, although he had not made any claim for it, he thought that he ought to have some consideration for his services to the two sons.

After a few years the widow died. Now there must be a settlement; but the borrower hoped the son who had been so efficiently befriended would be made administrator of the estate. Instead, a son-in-law was appointed, a man who, though successful in business, had the reputation of not being very particular as to the methods by which he attained success. This did not indicate leniency about the payment of the note, but the borrower allowed things to drift without any action until the legal time for the settlement of the estate had nearly expired.

He then began to think that the administrator had decided to let the whole subject drop, when one day an officer walked into his place of business and served a warrant on him for a thousand dollars. Delay could no longer continue. Something must be done. The question was, "What?" The borrower decided to begin by regulating his own mind, and succeeded so well that without mental discord he could think of all the incidents and persons connected with the affair, including his own remissness in not attending to the business as he ought to have done.

A few days before the time to appear and answer the warrant he sought out the administrator and told him that he had come to talk about the note. To the direct questions which the administrator asked he responded frankly that he made the note in good faith, that the signature was his own, that he received the money at the time he gave the note, and that he had not paid anything, not even the interest. Of course, such admissions to the administrator would ruin his case in any court. He then said that he thought two men of average intelligence who wanted nothing but what was right could themselves settle such a question as this without the intervention of the law. He maintained his own harmonious frame of mind while he told the administrator the whole story, and then the subject was discussed between them. The result was that at the end of an amicable conference of half an hour, without any suggestion or request from the borrower, the administrator offered to "call the whole thing square" without the payment of any money.

Avoidance of discordant thinking is of immense and direct importance, and even of money value, in business transactions; and yet all this is only controlling the mental action so as to keep it within the lines indicated by principle.

### **A DISCUSSION OF THE STORIES**

#### ***CHAPTER 34***

These incidents, which are absolutely true, are a practical demonstration of the importance of thought control in all social and business affairs, and they also show what may result from maintaining one's own mind in harmonious conditions, keeping it as closely as possible in the exact and perhaps seemingly narrow way of undoubted and unquestionable right without any attempt either directly or indirectly to influence any one else.

They are illustrations of the action of a power which, though not always recognized, is constantly operating among men; and they show why some persons utterly fail in their attempts, while yet others hinder and even pervert their own efforts. This power lies in the ability to control mental conditions and to establish the right mental state in one's own mind. This state, once established and maintained, works effectually toward the accomplishment of right results in one's own self and in others, and does this without any conscious effort of the person.

The really efficient work for others must follow work with one's own self. Without that all else fails. In neither of these cases cited did the one most interested attempt by any mental procedure, either surreptitious or otherwise, to influence the mind or actions of the other. In each case it was a frank, open, face-to-face transaction. To have done otherwise would have been specially reprehensible, and such a course would bear the same relation to rightful mental action that stealing does to legitimate financial transactions.

It is only a step from attempting to influence another mentally and in the right direction, but without his knowledge, to the attempt to influence him in doubtful or wrong ways. After all, who shall say that his own idea of right is absolutely without flaw, or even what is advisable or best for another? Can one always decide these questions for one's self? How much less, then, for another, especially when the most sincere and earnest convictions of the wisest men so contradict one another! And how shall one know what another wishes unless the wish is expressed? Secretly to influence another against his wishes is to dominate him. Far too often has this under-handed action been used to gain one's own purpose; and yet, many times, this has been done with the sincere conviction that it was a kindness or a duty and therefore was right and just and even praise-worthy. How wisely did Burns sing: -

" When self the wavering balance shakes 'Tis rarely right adjusted."

The thug of India not only believes he is right in strangling his victim, but he also believes, as sincerely and earnestly as any one else believes the contrary, that it is his religious duty and that his action will result in an immense advantage to the one he strangles. He is as sincere in this as most Christians are in their belief about what they ought to do for others, or even in their belief that what the thug does is wrong. Equally sincere are most of those who attempt secret mental influence. But the belief that they are right does not make them so.

Right is right, whatever may be the opinion of any one about it; and however conscientious one may be in an erroneous opinion, that conscientiousness does not make that opinion right.

There is only one thing either necessary or advisable, and that is to set one's own mind in order, making it right according as one sees the right, and then to leave the rest to the unrecognized but sure working of correct principles; remembering, of course, that this does not exclude a frank, open discussion of the differences after discord has been dismissed from the mind.

These incidents show the errors contained in two widely accepted opinions of humanity, and an understanding of these errors will greatly assist him who is striving for mental self-control.

The first is the almost universal tendency to lay the blame for one's failures or mistakes at the door of some other person or to charge it to the influence of one's surroundings. The Edenic plea of both Adam and Eve —Adam because of Eve, Eve because of the serpent (the serpent was not asked to speak for himself) —has availed to satisfy both men and women ever since the earliest dawn of history; but it has not yet availed, nor will it ever avail to avert the natural consequences of one's own acts.

Often it is enough to silence the average man's conscience when he thinks that he would not have committed the offence if it had not been for attendant circumstances. It is thought excuse enough for breaking an engagement to plead bad weather; anything or everything outside the person, trivial or important, is sufficient excuse to justify any failure, any neglect, and very often even an overt act. Though all this is wrong, yet every one is accustomed to these excuses, and most of us have used them in the attempt to satisfy our own compunctions and to effect an escape from difficulties which we have ourselves brought upon our own heads.

It is the mental condition that produces the action in every case, and each person is responsible for his own mental condition. Between the external circumstance and our action is always our own thinking, and it is that thinking and not the external circumstance or condition which decides what our action shall be. If Eve's thinking about the tree and its fruit had been different, —that is, if she had come to some different conclusion about the questions presented in that connection, —her action would have been different.

The same is also true of Adam. It was not the serpent and it was not the presence and character of the tree, - though each had a part in the course of events, —but it was their own final mental conclusion, which decided what their action should be. That mental conclusion was their own, and not another's, and, therefore, no one else but themselves was responsible for their actions. Thus it has always been with every Eve and every Adam. Whether the story of Adam and Eve is accepted as veritable history or considered as a fable, it admirably illustrates a nearly universal defect of humanity.

For the man who owed the note, a lawsuit with the prospect of its attendant evils was all ready to his hand. The same was impending over Smith and the contractor. Had either Smith or the man who owed the note failed to control his thinking, he might have said: "I was not responsible for this trouble. Others began it." In both cases the events as they transpired show that each would have been himself responsible, because it was clearly in his power to avert the disaster. Every man claims praise for the good result as the consequence of his right action. On the same basis, how can he avoid blame if, by his own erroneous thinking, he increases the difficulty and brings about evil results?

This leads to the consideration of a second mistaken but very prevalent opinion, and it also leads to an understanding of the erroneous actions consequent upon that opinion.

A large part of mankind are zealously striving to reform all the rest of the world except themselves. Every one sees how another ought to conduct himself, and each is doing his best to effect the desired reformation in his neighbor, because he believes with the good old Quaker, "All the world is queer except thee and me, and thee is a little queer." We have reformers on all sides trying to persuade men to avoid every evil that afflicts mankind; and we have governments with courts of justice and prisons attempting forcibly to prevent men from doing wrong or to compel them to do right. All these means and Measures no doubt accomplish much good, at least as educators; and the motive behind them all is excellent.

In point of fact, however, no one can reform another, although each can reform himself, and by that reformation may so influence others that they will also reform themselves. The reformation at last is one's own work done by one's own self. Of course there may be and ought to be wise suggestions, assistance, encouragement, advice, counsel, thus giving much help to others in a multitude of ways whenever it is desired; but, notwithstanding all, the essential and only really vital and effective work must be done by one's own self. This is because thinking is the fundamental act without which nothing can be accomplished, and one cannot think with another's mind any more than he can see with another's eyes.

The teacher might have remonstrated with her assistant, but probably it would have had no result except to antagonize and irritate her and intensify the already troublesome conditions. Without any attempt whatever in that direction the effort of the teacher to reform herself wrought wonders in the reformation of her assistant.

The contractor was manifestly blameworthy because he had not done all that he had agreed to do, and he surely needed reforming. The owner of the property by due process of law might have compelled him to complete the work, but there would not have been any reformatory result from that action. In any attempt to enforce reform upon the contractor the result attained through the self-reformation of the property owner would have been lost, and in the end both would have been worse off

mentally and morally.

In the case of the note it is true that payment might have been avoided by some legal process, questionable or otherwise; but that would have produced various and serious discordant conditions for all concerned, and probably it would have resulted in very serious injury to the borrower. All these probabilities are in sharp and unfavorable contrast with the harmonious results which followed the borrower's reformation of him-self.

The fact is clearly apparent in these and multitudes of other incidents that, whether we intend it or not, our unspoken thoughts influence those with whom we come in contact; and this presents the control of our thinking in a new aspect and gives it an immensely increased value when considered in connection with our relationship to our fellows. Max Muller said: "The only thing of consequence, to my mind, is what we think, what we know, what we believe."

Herein is the secret of the immense influence of good lives. As has been shown so clearly, the kind of life one lives is the product of the kind of thinking one does, and the good thinking sheds itself abroad upon others as the sun radiates light, without any intention or effort. Therefore Jesus said: "Let your light shine." He did not say: "Make it shine." Leave the light alone, but have it, and it will shine of itself. Interference and assistance often hinder. The very best one can do is to be. The measure of the influence of a man, whether preacher or layman, is found in what he is rather than in what he says; perhaps least of all in what he intends.

This explains one great secret of the tremendous power and permanence of the influence of Jesus, the Christ, who not only taught and did right, living the right life, but who also -the under-lying cause of all -thought right. The results which came to him will also come to us in proportion as we keep ourselves right.

The opinion has generally been held that a person has the right to think what he pleases, but this is not correct. In one sense a man's thoughts are not his own any more than are his words when once uttered. We know the word from the speaker goes out to bless or to curse, and recall is impossible. It is the same with the thought also. As he should not have uttered the wrong word, so he ought not to have allowed the existence of the wrong thought.

In point of fact every thought, whatever its character may be, produces its definite result, not only whether we will or not, but in spite of the will we may exercise to prevent it. "Then every thought of disease, every imagination of fear of distrust or gloomy foreboding, would scatter, and, like contagion, depress the lives of others. Then every sentiment of hate would have in it a little of the real effect of murder, every harsh judgment would carry a vital effect of ill. Every thought of doubt or despair would make it harder for others to bear their burdens and believe in the infinite good."

This is a dark side of the picture, but it is not overdrawn. A man is indeed responsible for his speech and his acts; he is also equally responsible for the thoughts which cause them, and he should guard his thoughts even more carefully than he does his acts. But there is a bright side also. A man can control his thinking much more easily than he can his speaking and acting when his thinking is not first controlled. Better still, he can control that thinking in the right direction, and when this is done, its consequences are so controlled that they need no attention whatever, and there is no further responsibility nor danger.

### **SENSITIVENESS**

#### **CHAPTER 35**

Sensitiveness is the tendency or disposition to be easily affected by external objects, events, or conditions. We say that a person is sensitive who is so delicately constituted that he is keenly susceptible of external influences or impressions, is easily affected or moved by outward circumstances, and responds quickly to very slight changes of condition. Though so often misunderstood and condemned, it is one of man's greatest blessings. The peculiar sensitiveness of the optic nerve gives sight. Deficient sensitiveness of that nerve causes imperfect sight; entire lack of it is blindness. The greater its sensitiveness, the better the sight and the more we may see, and know, and understand, if we will only use it as we should; that is, if the perception is followed by the right kind of thinking. This is true of every perception.

Superiority in any sphere is unattainable without that sensitiveness which confers larger knowledge and understanding. There is much discussion about what constitutes genius; at least one element without which it cannot exist is an extreme degree of this very sensitiveness, and the degree of sensitiveness often determines the degree of genius.

It is this characteristic which enables the musician to perceive shades of tone which another cannot hear. It gives him information essential to the execution of delicate musical passages impossible to others who do not possess the quality in the same degree; and in directing an orchestra or a chorus it is this which enables him to perceive

advantages and defects which would pass unnoticed by one less favored. This keenness of perception is indispensable to leadership.

On the other hand, there are persons who cultivate themselves into spasms over a discord, and, by glorifying their suffering as a mark of superiority, they unintentionally provoke similar disturbing conditions in their associates. This agitation is the result of their thinking, and thinking is entirely distinct from sensitiveness. By avoiding their in-harmonious thoughts about the discord they will

Theodore Thomas had so cultivated his sensitive ear that not only could he detect the slightest discor