

As You Think

A generic modernized version of James Allan's "As A Man Thinketh"

THOUGHT AND CHARACTER

The aphorism, "As you thinketh in your heart so you are," not only embraces the whole human being, but is so comprehensive it reaches out to every condition and circumstance of life. A person is literally what they think, and a person's character is the complete sum of all of all of their individual's thoughts.

Just as the plant springs from, and could not be without, the seed, so every human act springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and couldn't have appeared without them. This applies equally to acts called "spontaneous" and "unpremeditated" as what it does to those, deliberately executed. Act is the blossom of thought, and joy and suffering are its fruits; and so we all garner in the sweet and bitter fruitage of our own doing.

Thought in the mind has made us what we are. All that we have and all that we do is and was created by thoughts. If a mind has evil thoughts, pain soon comes into the heart and mind. But if one endures in purity of thought, joy swiftly follows in ones shadow.

Humans are a growth by law, and not a creation by artifice, and cause and effect is as absolute and undeviating in the hidden realm of thought as in the world of visible and material things. A noble character is not a thing of favor or chance, but is the natural result of continued effort in right thinking, the effect of clear and noble thoughts. An ignoble and bestial character, by the same process, is the result of the continued harboring of groveling thoughts.

We are all made or unmade by ourselves. In the realm of thought we forge the weapons by which we destroy ourselves; and also fashion the tools with which we create for ourselves. By the right choice and true application of thought, we ascend; but by the abuse and wrong application of thought, we descend to the animal nature, or the level of the beast. Between these two extremes are all the grades of character. Mankind is its own maker and master.

Of all the truths pertaining to the soul which are, in this present time, being brought to light once again, none is more enlightening and empowering than this – "That humans are the master of thought, the molders of character, and the makers and shapers of conditions, environments, and destiny. As a being of power and intelligence, and the lord of their own thoughts, humans hold the key to every situation, and contain within themselves a transforming and regenerative agency by which they may make themselves what they create by will.

Human beings are always the master, even in their weaker and most abandoned state; in a weak and degraded state they are the foolish masters who misgoverned their "household." When they begin to reflect upon this condition, and to search diligently for the Laws upon which a human being is established, they then become a wise master, directing energy with intelligence, and fashioning thoughts to fruitful issues. Such is the _conscious _master, who humans can only become by discovering _within themselves _the laws of thought; which is totally a matter of application, self analysis, time, and experience. Only by much searching and mining, are etheric gold and diamonds obtained.

Humans can find every truth connected with their being, if they dig deep into the mine of their soul; and truly understand that by thought and deed, humans are the makers of their character, the molders of their life, and the builders of his destiny. You can easily prove this for yourself by intentionally watching, controlling, and altering your own thoughts, then seeing the effects upon yourself, upon others, and upon your life and circumstances. This then brings knowledge of the self which results in Understanding, Wisdom, and Power. In this direction, as in no other, is the law absolute that "He that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened;" for only by patience, practice, and ceaseless importunity can any person enter the Door of the Temple of Knowledge.

EFFECT OF THOUGHT ON CIRCUMSTANCES

The mind can be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild. But whether it is cultivated or neglected it must, and will, bring forth, if no useful seeds are put into it, then an abundance of useless weed-seeds will predominate, and will continue to produce their own kind.

Just as a gardener cultivates his plot, keeping it free from weeds, and growing the flowers and fruits of his or her choice, so all individuals should tend the garden of the mind, weeding out all the wrong, useless, and impure thoughts, and cultivating toward perfection the flowers and fruits of right, useful, and pure thoughts. By pursuing this process, humans sooner or later discover that they are the masters and the gardeners of their soul, the directors of their lives. This also reveals within the self, the laws of thought, and brings understanding with ever-increasing accuracy, as to how the thought-forces and mind elements operate in the shaping of character, circumstances, and destiny.

Thought and character are one, and as character can only manifest and discover itself through environment and circumstance. The outer conditions of a person's life will always be found to be harmoniously related to his inner state. This doesn't mean that a person's circumstance at any given time is an indication of their entire character, but that those circumstances are so intimately connected with some vital thought element within, that for the time being, they are indispensable to development.

Everybody, relative to and within the environment they live in, is where they are by the law of their being. The thoughts from the thought patterns which they have built into their character have brought them there. In the arrangement of life there is no element of chance, but all is the result of a law which cannot err. This is just as true of those who feel "out of harmony" with their surroundings as it is for those who are contented with them.

As a progressive and evolving being, humans are where they are so that they may learn and grow; and as we learn the so called spiritual lesson which any circumstance contains, it passes away and gives place to other circumstances.

People are only buffeted by circumstances so long as they believe themselves to be subjected to those outside conditions. It is when we realize our creative power, and that we may command the hidden soil and seeds in our being out of which circumstances grow when we utilize the principles, and then we become the rightful masters of ourselves.

Circumstance grows out of thought. Every person who has for any length of time practiced self-control and thought purification knows this is true, because they will have noticed that the alteration in their circumstances has been in exact ratio with their altered thought patterns and mental condition. So true is this, that when any person earnestly applies themselves to remedy the defects in their character, and makes swift and marked progress, they rapidly pass through a succession of vicissitudes.

The soul attracts that which it secretly harbors, that which it loves, and also that which it fears. It reaches the height of its cherished aspirations; and it falls to the level of its lowest desires. It is circumstances that are the means by which the soul receives its own. The outer world of circumstance shapes itself to the inner world of thought, and both pleasant and unpleasant external conditions are factors, which make for the ultimate good of the individual. As the reaper of their own harvest, all human beings learn both by suffering and bliss.

Every thought-seed sown or allowed to fall into the mind, and to take root there, produces its own fruit, blossoming sooner or later into an act, and bearing its own fruitage of opportunity and circumstance. Good thoughts bear good fruit, bad thoughts bad fruit.

Following the inmost desires, aspirations, and thoughts, by which individuals allow themselves to be dominated, (pursuing the will-o'-the-wisps of impure imaginings or steadfastly walking the highway of strong and high endeavor); in their souls people arrive inside as a direct reflection of the fruition and fulfillment in the outer conditions of their life. The laws of growth and adjustment everywhere obtains.

Humans don't come to misery, depression, obesity, anger, or emotional self imprisonment by the tyranny of fate or circumstance, but by the pathway of groveling or incorrect thoughts and base or negative actions and desires. Nor does a pure-minded person turn suddenly to crime by stress or influence of any external force; the criminal thought had long been secretly fostered in the heart, and the hour of opportunity revealed its gathered power.

Circumstance does not make the person; it reveals them to themselves and the truth to others. Only negative and dishonest thoughts and inclinations can descend one into vice and its attendant sufferings. Pure and honest thinking ascends to virtue and happiness without the continued cultivation of virtuous aspirations. People, therefore, as the lords and masters of thought, are the makers of themselves, the shapers and authors of their environment. Even at birth the soul comes to its own and through every step of its earthly pilgrimage it attracts those combinations of conditions which reveal itself, which are the reflections of its own purity and, impurity, its strength and weakness.

We don't attract that which we want, but that which we truly are. Many of our whims, fancies, and ambitions are thwarted at every step, but the inmost thoughts and desires are fed with their own food, be it foul or clean. The "divinity that shapes our ends" is in us. It is our very self. Only we manacle ourselves: Thought and action are the jailers of Fate. They are also the angels of Freedom -- they liberate, when noble. Not what a person wishes and prays for do they get, but what they justly earn. Wishes and prayers are only gratified and answered when they intentionally harmonize with thoughts and actions. In the light of this truth, what, then, is the meaning of "fighting against circumstances?" It means that a person is continually revolting against an effect from without, while all the time nourishing and preserving its cause in their heart. That cause may take the form of a conscious vice or an unconscious weakness; but whatever it is, it stubbornly retards the efforts of its possessor

People are always anxious to improve their circumstances, but are unwilling to improve themselves; and so they remain bound. Those who refuse to indulge in self criticism and self-crucifixion, or refuse to believe the negative opinions of others can never fail to accomplish the object upon which the heart is set. This is as true of earthly as of heavenly things. Even those whose sole object is to acquire wealth must be prepared to make great personal sacrifices before they can accomplish this objective; and much more so for those who would realize a strong and well-poised life?

Consider an individual who is wretchedly poor. They are extremely anxious that their surroundings and home comforts should be improved, yet all the time they shirk their work, and consider they are justified in trying to deceive their employer on the grounds of the insufficiency of his wages. Such a person doesn't understand the simplest rudiments of those principles which are the basis of true prosperity, and is not only totally unfitted to rise out of his wretchedness, but is actually attracting to himself a still deeper wretchedness by dwelling in, and acting out, indolent, deceptive, and unmanly thoughts.

Consider a wealthy individual who is the victim of a painful and persistent disease as the result of gluttony. They are willing to give large sums of money to get rid of it, but they will not sacrifice their gluttonous desires. They want to gratify their taste for rich and unnatural foods and have their health

as well. Such an individual is unfit to have health, because they have not yet learned the first principles of a healthy life.

Consider an employer who adopts crooked measures to avoid paying the regulation wage, and in the hope of making larger profits, reduces the wages of his workers. Such an employer is altogether unfitted for prosperity, and when they find themselves bankrupt, both in reputation and riches, they blame circumstances. Not knowing or understanding that they are the sole author of the condition.

Those three cases merely illustrate the truth; that humans are the causers (though nearly always unconsciously) of their circumstances, and that, whilst aiming at a good end, are continually frustrating in accomplishments by encouraging or allowing thoughts and desires which don't harmonize with the desired end. Such cases could be multiplied and varied almost indefinitely, but this isn't necessary, because you can trace the action of the laws of thought in your own mind and life. Until this is done, mere external facts cannot serve as a ground of reasoning.

Circumstances are always so complicated, thought is so deeply rooted, and the conditions of happiness vary so vastly with individuals, that an entire soul's condition can't be judged by another person from the external aspect alone. An individual may be honest in certain directions, yet still suffer privations. A person may be dishonest in certain directions, yet acquire wealth. But the conclusion usually formed; that a person fails because of their particular honesty, and that the other prospers because of his particular dishonesty, is the result of a superficial judgment, which assumes that the dishonest individual is almost totally corrupt, and the honest person is almost entirely virtuous. In the light of a deeper knowledge and wider experience such judgment is found to be erroneous. The dishonest person will still have some admirable virtues, which the other doesn't possess; and the honest individual some obnoxious vices which are absent in the other. While the honest individual reaps the good results of their honest thoughts and acts; they also bring upon themselves the sufferings which their vices produce. The dishonest individual likewise garners their own suffering and happiness.

It is pleasing to human vanity to believe that one suffers because of one's virtue; but not until an individual has attained the almost impossible and purged every sickly, bitter, and impure thought from their mind can they be in any position to know and declare that their sufferings are the result of their good, and not of their bad qualities. And on the way to, but long before they have reached that supreme perfection, they will have discovered and realized that working in their mind and life, a great Law which is absolutely just. A natural law that can't give good for evil, evil for good. Possessed of such knowledge, they will then know, looking back upon past ignorance and blindness that life is, and always was, justly ordered, and that all past experiences, good and bad, were the equitable outworking of the evolving, and yet unevolved self.

Good thoughts and actions can never produce bad results; bad thoughts and actions can never produce good results. Nothing can come from corn but corn, nothing from nettles but nettles. Human beings understand this law in the natural world, and work with it; and although its operation here in the mental and moral world is just as simple and undeviating few understand it, and therefore don't co-operate with it.

Suffering is always the effect of wrong thought in some direction. It is an indication that the individual is out of harmony with himself and with the Laws of his being. The sole and supreme use of suffering is to purify, to burn out all that is useless and impure. Suffering ceases for those who are pure. There could be no object in burning gold after the dross had been removed, and so a perfectly pure and enlightened being could not suffer.

The circumstances encountered with suffering, are the result of mental dis-harmony. The circumstances encountered with happiness and blessedness is the result of mental harmony. Blessedness, not material possessions, is the measure of right thought. Wretchedness, not lack of material possessions, is the measure of wrong thought. An individual may be cursed and rich; or they may be blessed and poor. Blessedness and riches are only joined together when the riches are rightly and wisely used; and the poor man only descends into wretchedness when he regards his lot as a burden unjustly imposed.

Indigence and indulgence are the two extremes of wretchedness. They are both equally unnatural and the result of mental disorder. A person is not rightly conditioned until they are a happy, healthy, and prosperous being; and happiness, health, and prosperity are the result of a harmonious adjustment of the inner with the outer, of the individual with their surroundings.

An individual only begins to unfold when they cease to whine and revile, and commence searching for the hidden justice which regulates life. And as they adapt their mind to that regulating factor, they cease to accuse others as the cause of conditions, and build themselves up in strong and noble thoughts. They cease to kick against circumstances, but begin using them as aids to their more rapid progress, and as a means of discovering the hidden powers and possibilities within each of us.

Law, not confusion, is the dominating principle in the universe. Justice, not injustice, is the soul and substance of life; and righteousness, not corruption, is the molding and moving force in the spiritual government of the world. This being so, humans have to right themselves to find that the universe is right; and during the process of putting themselves right they will find that as they alter their thoughts towards things and other people, things and other people will alter towards them.

The proof of this truth is in every person, and is easily investigated by systematic introspection and self-analysis. Let an individual radically alter their thoughts, and they will be astonished at the rapid transformation it will effect in the material conditions of their life. People imagine that thoughts can be kept secret, but they cannot. Thoughts rapidly crystallize into habit, and habit solidifies into circumstance.

Bestial thoughts crystallize into habits of lust, intoxication and sensuality, which solidify into circumstances of destitution and disease. Impure thoughts of every kind crystallize into destructive and confusing habits, which solidify into distracting and adverse circumstances. Thoughts of fear, doubt, and indecision crystallize into weakness, and irresolute habits, which solidify into circumstances of failure, indigence, and slavish dependence. Lazy thoughts crystallize into habits of uncleanness and dishonesty, which solidify into circumstances of foulness and beggary. Hateful and condemnatory thoughts crystallize into habits of accusation and violence, which solidify into circumstances of injury and persecution. Selfish thoughts of all kinds crystallize into habits of self-seeking, which solidify into circumstances of loneliness and distress.

On the other hand, beautiful thoughts of all kinds crystallize into habits of grace and kindness, which solidify into genial and sunny circumstances. Pure thoughts crystallize into habits of temperance and self-control, which solidify into circumstances of repose and peace. Thoughts of courage, self-reliance, and decision crystallize into pure habits, which solidify into circumstances of success, plenty, and freedom. Energetic thoughts crystallize into habits of cleanliness and industry, which solidify into circumstances of pleasantness. Gentle and forgiving thoughts crystallize into habits of gentleness, which solidify into protective and preservative circumstances. Loving and unselfish thoughts crystallize into habits of self-forgetfulness for others, which solidify into circumstances of sure and abiding prosperity and true riches.

A particular train of thought persisted in, be it good or bad, must produce its results on the character and circumstances. Humans cannot directly choose their circumstances, but they can choose their thoughts, and so indirectly, yet surely, shape their circumstances. Nature helps every individual to the gratification of their thoughts, and opportunities are presented which will most speedily bring to the surface both the good and evil thoughts.

Let an individual cease from sinful thoughts and the world will soften towards them, and be ready to help them. Put aside weakly and sickly thoughts and opportunities will spring up on every hand to aid strong resolves. Encourage good thoughts and no hard fate can bind any person down to wretchedness and shame. The world is your kaleidoscope, and the varying combinations of colors, which at every succeeding moment it presents, are the exquisitely adjusted pictures of ever-moving thoughts. "The human will is a force unseen; it is the offspring of a deathless soul.

EFFECT OF THOUGHT ON HEALTH AND THE BODY

The body is the servant of the mind. It obeys the operations of the mind, whether they be deliberately chosen or automatically expressed at a subconscious level. At the bidding of incorrect and imbalanced thoughts the body sinks rapidly into disease and decay; at the command of glad and beautiful thoughts it becomes clothed with youthfulness and beauty.

Disease and health, like circumstances, are rooted in thought. Sickly thoughts will express themselves through a sickly body. Thoughts of fear have been known to kill as speedily as a bullet, and they are continually killing thousands of people just as surely though less rapidly. The people who live in fear of disease are the people who get it. Anxiety quickly demoralizes the whole body, and lays it open to the entrance of disease; while impure thoughts, even if not physically indulged, shatter the nervous system.

Strong, pure, and happy thoughts build up the body in vigor and grace. The body is a delicate and plastic instrument, which responds readily to the thoughts by which it is impressed, and habits of thought will produce and impress their own effects, good or bad, upon it.

Out of a defiled mind proceeds a defiled life and a corrupt body. Thought is the fount of action, life, and manifestation. Make the fountain pure, and all will be pure. A change of diet will not help one who will not change their thoughts. When thoughts are focused and pure, there is little desire for impure food. Clean thoughts make clean habits. The so-called saint who doesn't wash his body is not a saint.

If you would protect your body, guard your mind. If you would renew your body, beautify your mind. Thoughts of malice, envy, disappointment, despondency, rob the body of its health and grace. A sour face does not come by chance; it is made by sour thoughts. Wrinkles that mar are drawn by folly, passion, and pride.

As you cannot have a sweet and wholesome abode unless you admit the air and sunshine freely into your rooms, so a strong body and a bright, happy, or serene countenance can only result from the free admittance into the mind of thoughts of joy, contentedness, goodwill, and serenity. On the faces of the aged there are wrinkles made by sympathy, others by strong and pure thought, and others are carved by passion: we can distinguish them? With those who have lived righteously, age is calm, peaceful, and softly mellowed, like the setting sun.

There is no physician like cheerful thoughts for dissipating the ills of the body. There is no comforter to compare with goodwill for dispersing the shadows of grief and sorrow. To live continually in thoughts of ill will, cynicism, suspicion, and envy, is to be confined in a self made prison-hole. But to think well of all, to be cheerful with all, and to dwell day by day in thoughts of peace toward every creature will bring abounding peace to the thinker.

THOUGHT AND PURPOSE

Until thought is linked with purpose there is no intelligent accomplishment. With the majority, their thoughts are allowed to "drift" upon the ocean of life. Aimlessness is a vice, and such drifting must not continue for those who would steer clear of difficulties, catastrophe, or destruction. They who have no central purpose in their life fall an easy prey to petty worries, fears, troubles, and self-pitying, all of which are indications of weakness which lead just as surely as deliberately planned sins (though by a different route), to failure, unhappiness, and loss, for weakness cannot persist in a power evolving universe.

Conceive of a legitimate purpose in the heart and set out to accomplish it. Make this purpose the centralizing point of your thoughts. It may take the form of a spiritual ideal, or it may be a worldly object? Whichever it is, steadily focus your thought-forces upon the object, which you have set before you. Make this purpose, a supreme duty, and devote yourself to its attainment. Don't allow your thoughts to wander away into ephemeral fancies, longings, and imaginings. This is the path to self-control and true concentration of thought. Even if an individual fails again and again to accomplish their purpose (as they necessarily must until weakness is overcome), the strength of character gained will be the measure of their true success, and this will form a new starting-point for future power and triumph.

Those who are not prepared for the apprehension of a great purpose should fix the thoughts upon the faultless performance of their duty, no matter how insignificant their task may appear. Only in this way can the thoughts be gathered and focused, and resolution and energy be developed, which once done, there is nothing which may not be accomplished.

The weakest soul, knowing its own weakness, and believing this truth; that strength can only be developed by effort and practice, will, thus believing, begin to exert itself adding effort to effort, patience to patience, and strength to strength. Never ceasing to develop, and will at last grow divinely strong. As the physically weak person can make themselves strong by careful and patient training, so the possessor of weak thoughts can make themselves strong by exercising in right thinking.

To put away aimlessness and weakness, and to begin to think with purpose, is to enter the ranks of the strong ones who only recognize failure as one of the pathways to attainment; who make all conditions serve them, and who think strongly, attempt fearlessly, and accomplish masterfully.

Having conceived of a purpose, mentally mark out a straight pathway to its achievement, looking neither to the right or the left. Doubts and fears should be rigorously excluded; they are disintegrating elements which break up the straight line of fortitude or render it crooked, ineffectual, and useless. Thoughts of doubt and fear never accomplished anything, and never can. They always lead to failure. Purpose, energy, power to do, and all strong thoughts cease when doubt and fear creep in.

The will to do springs from the knowledge that we can do. Doubt and fear are the great enemies of knowledge, and those who encourage them thwart themselves at every step. Those who have conquered doubt and fear have conquered failure. If every thought is allied with power, and all difficulties are met and wisely overcome, then purposes are seasonably planted, and they will bloom and bring forth fruit, which doesn't fall prematurely to the ground.

Thought allied fearlessly to purpose becomes creative force. Those who know this are ready and able to become something higher and stronger than a mere bundle of wavering thoughts and fluctuating

sensations. Those who do this have become the conscious and intelligent wielder of their own mental powers.

THE THOUGHT- FACTOR IN ACHIEVEMENT

All that people achieve and all that they fail to achieve is the direct result of their own thoughts. In a justly ordered universe, where loss of equipoise would mean total destruction, individual responsibility must be absolute. Weakness and strength, purity and impurity, are an individuals own, and not another's. They are brought about by the self, and not by another; and so they can only be altered by the self, never by another. An individuals condition is also their own, and not another's. Suffering and happiness are evolved from within. As you think, so you are. As you continue to think, so you remain.

The stronger cannot help the weaker unless the weaker is willing to be helped, and even then the weaker must become strong of themselves; they must, by their own efforts, develop the strength which they admire in another. No one but ourselves can alter our condition. It has been usual to think and to say, "Many are slaves because one is an oppressor; let us hate the oppressor." Now, however, there is amongst an increasing few a tendency to reverse this judgment, and to say, "One is an oppressor because many are slaves; let us despise the slaves."

The truth is that oppressor and slave are co-operators in ignorance, and, while seeming to afflict each other, are in reality afflicting themselves. A perfect knowledge perceives the action of law in the weakness of the oppressed and the misapplied power of the oppressor. Whereas a perfect love, seeing the suffering, which both states entail, condemns neither; a perfect compassion embraces both oppressor and oppressed. Those who have conquered weakness, and have put away all selfish thoughts, belongs neither to the oppressor nor the oppressed. They are free. Humans can only rise, conquer, and achieve anything by lifting up their thoughts. They can only remain weak, abject, and miserable by refusing to lift up their thoughts.

Before anyone can achieve anything, including the attainment of financial prosperity, they must focus their thoughts towards the desire. In order to succeed it is not necessary to give up all animalism and selfishness, by any means. But at least a portion of it must be sacrificed. Those whose first thoughts are indulgent and base can neither think clearly nor plan methodically. They can't find and develop their latent resources, and so they fail in most undertakings. Not having commenced to control their thoughts, they are not in a position to control affairs or to adopt serious responsibilities. They are not fit to act independently and stand alone. But even so are only limited only by the thoughts, which they choose.

There can be no progress, no achievement without sacrifice, and true worldly success will be in the measure that confused, base, and animal thoughts are sacrificed, and the mind is fixed on the development of plans, and the strengthening of resolution and self-reliance. The higher and more purposeful thoughts, the more, upright, righteous, and contented the thinker becomes, and so even greater will be success, the more blessed and enduring will achievements be.

The universe doesn't favor the greedy, the dishonest, or the vicious; although on the surface it may sometimes appear to do so. The universe also helps the honest, the magnanimous, and the virtuous. All the great teachers of the ages have declared this in varying forms, and to prove and know it for yourself you have to persist in making yourself more and more virtuous by lifting up your thoughts.

Intellectual achievements are the result of thought consecrated to the search for knowledge, or for the beautiful and true in life and nature. Such achievements may be sometimes connected with vanity and ambition, but they are not the outcome of those characteristics; they are the natural outgrowth of long and arduous effort, and of pure and unselfish thoughts. Spiritual achievements are the

consummation of holy aspirations. Those who live constantly in the conception of noble and lofty thoughts, who dwell upon what is pure and unselfish, will become wise and noble in character, and rise into a position of influence and blessedness.

Achievement of whatever kind is the crown of effort, the diadem of thought. By the aid of self-control, resolution, purity, righteousness, and well-directed thought an individual ascends; by the aid of animalism, indolence, impurity, corruption, and confusion of thought an individual descends.

You may rise to high success in the world, and even to lofty altitudes in the spiritual realm, and then descend into weakness and wretchedness by allowing arrogant, selfish, and corrupt thoughts to take possession. Victories attained by right thought can only be maintained by watchfulness. Many give way when success is assured, and rapidly fall back into failure.

All achievements whether in the business, intellectual, or spiritual world, are the result of definitely directed thought. They are governed by the same laws and are of the same methods; the only difference lies in the object of attainment. Those who would accomplish little must sacrifice little; those who would achieve much must sacrifice much. Those who would attain highly must sacrifice greatly.

VISIONS AND IDEALS

The dreamers are the saviors of the world. As the visible world is sustained by the invisible so people, through all their trials and sins and sordid vocations, are nourished by the beautiful visions of their solitary dreamers. Humanity cannot forget its dreamers; it cannot let their ideals fade and die. It lives in them; it knows them as the realities which it shall one day see and know. Composer, sculptor, painter, poet, prophet, sage, these are the makers of the after-world, the architects of heaven. The world is beautiful because they have lived; without them, laboring humanity would perish.

Those who cherish a beautiful vision, a lofty ideal at heart, will one day realize it. Columbus cherished a vision of another world, and he discovered it; Copernicus fostered the vision of a multiplicity of worlds and a wider universe, and he revealed it; Buddha beheld the vision of a spiritual world of stainless beauty and perfect peace, and he entered into it. Cherish your visions; cherish your ideals; cherish what stirs in your heart, and what forms in your mind. If you remain true to that, then your world will at last be built.

"Ask and receive." Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so shall you become. Your Vision is the promise of what you shall one day be. Your Ideal is the prophecy of what you shall at last unveil. The smallest and the greatest achievements were at first and for a time only dreams. The oak sleeps in the acorn; the bird waits in the egg; and in the highest vision of the soul the unseen laws do their mystical work. Dreams are the seedlings of realities.

Your circumstances may be difficult but they will quickly change if you simply perceive an ideal and strive to reach it. You cannot travel within and stand still without. Imagine a youth hard pressed by poverty and labor; confined long hours in an unhealthy workshop; unschooled, and lacking all the arts of refinement. But he dreams of better things; he thinks of intelligence, of refinement, of grace and beauty. He conceives of, mentally builds up, an ideal condition of life; the vision of a wider liberty and a larger scope takes possession of him; unrest urges him to action, and he utilizes all his spare time and means, small though they are, to the development of his latent powers and resources.

Very soon so altered has his mind become that the workshop can no longer hold him. It has become so out of harmony with his mentality that it falls out of his life as a garment is cast aside, and, with the growth of opportunities, which fit the scope of his expanding powers, he passes out of it forever. Years later we see this youth as a full-grown man. We find him a master of certain forces of the mind, which he wields with worldwide influence and almost unequalled power. In his hands he holds the cords of gigantic responsibilities; he speaks, and lo, lives are changed; men and women hang upon his words and remold their characters, and, sun like, he becomes the fixed and luminous centre round which innumerable destinies revolve. He has realized the Vision of his youth. He has become one with his Ideal.

And you too can realize the Visions (not the idle wish) in your heart, be it base or beautiful, or a mixture of both, for you will always gravitate toward that which you, secretly, most love. Into your hands will be placed the exact results of your own thoughts. You will receive that which you earn; no more, no less. Whatever your present environment may be, you will fall, remain, or rise with your thoughts, your Vision, your Ideal. You will become as small as your controlling desire; as great as your dominant aspiration.

The thoughtless, the ignorant, the envious, and the indolent, seeing only the apparent effects of things and not the trials that manifested the things themselves, talk of luck, of fortune, and chance.

Seeing a person grow rich, they say, "How lucky they are!" Observing another become intellectual, they exclaim, "How highly favored they are!" And noting the saintly character and wide influence of another, they remark, "How chance aids them at every turn!"

They don't see the trials and failures or struggles these people have voluntarily encountered in order to gain their experience. The mockers have no knowledge of the sacrifices that may have been made, or of the undaunted efforts that have been put forth, of the faith exercised, that they might overcome the apparently insurmountable, and realize the Vision of their heart. The mockers don't know the darkness and the heartaches; they only see the light and joy, and call it "luck". They don't see the long and arduous journey, only the attainment of a goal, and call it "good fortune". They don't understand the process, but only perceive the result, and call it chance.

In all human affairs there are efforts and there are results, and the strength of the effort is the measure of the result. There is no such thing as chance. Gifts, powers, material, intellectual and spiritual possessions are the fruits of effort. They are thoughts completed, objects accomplished, visions realized. The Vision that you glorify in your mind, the Ideal that you enthrone in your heart--this you will build your life by, this you will become.

SERENITY

Calmness of mind is a jewel of wisdom. It is the result of long and patient effort in self-control. Its presence is an indication of ripened experience, and of a more than ordinary knowledge of the laws, operations, and effects of thought.

An individual becomes calm in the measure that they understand themselves as a thought evolved being, such knowledge necessitates the understanding of others being who they are as the result of their own thoughts. As right understanding develops the individual sees more and more clearly the internal relations of things, by the action of cause and effect and so ceases to fuss and fume and worry and grieve, and remains poised, steadfast, serene.

The calm person, having learned how to govern themselves, knows how to adapt to others; and they, in turn, reverence the spiritual strength, and feel that they can learn from and rely upon the calm person. The more tranquil a person becomes, the greater is their success, their influence, their power for good.

The strong, calm individual is always revered. Like a shade-giving tree in a thirsty land, or a sheltering rock in a storm. "Who doesn't love a tranquil heart, a sweet-tempered, balanced life? It doesn't matter whether it rains or shines, or what changes come to those possessing these blessings, they remain serene, and calm. That exquisite poise of character, which we call serenity, is the last lesson of culture. It is precious as wisdom. How insignificant mere money seeking looks in comparison with a serene life--a life that dwells in the ocean of Truth, beneath the waves, beyond the reach of tempests, in the Eternal Calm!

"How many people sour their lives, and ruin all that is sweet and beautiful by explosive tempers, who destroy their poise of character and make bad blood! The great majorities of people ruin their lives and mar their happiness by lack of self-control. How few people we meet in life that are well balanced. Who have that exquisite poise which is characteristic of the finished character! Yes, humanity surges with uncontrolled passion, life is tumultuous with ungoverned grief, and is blown about by anxiety and doubt. The wise, whose thoughts are controlled and purified, makes the winds and the storms of the soul obey them. Self-control is strength; Right Thought is mastery; Calmness is power.