

ONE WAY TO CULTIVATE COURAGE

COURAGE AND PRESENCE OF MIND MEAN THE SAME THING. PRESENCE of mind implies command of mind.

Cowardice and lack of mental control mean about the same thing. Cowardice is rooted in hurry, the habit of hurry or lack of repose.

All degrees of success are based on courage—mental or physical.
All degrees of failure are based on timidity.

You can cultivate courage and increase it at every minute and hour of the day. You can have the satisfaction of knowing that in everything you do you have accomplished two things—namely, the doing of the thing itself and by the manner of its doing, adding eternally to yourself another atom of the quality of courage. You can do this by the cultivation of deliberation—deliberation of speech, of walk, of writing, of eating—deliberation in everything.

There is always a bit of fear where there is a bit of hurry. When you hurry to the train you are in fear that you may be left, and with that comes fear of other possibilities consequent on your being left. When you hurry to the party, to the meeting of a person by appointment, you are in fear of some ill or damage resulting from not being in time.

This habit of thought can, through an unconscious training, grow to such an extent as to pervade a person's mind, at all times and places, and bring on a fear of loss of some kind, when there is absolutely no loss to be sustained. For instance a person may hurry to

catch a street car and act and feel as if a great loss would occur did he not get on that particular car, when there may be another close behind, or at most two or three minutes' waiting will bring it. Yet the fear of waiting those three minutes grows to a mountain in size, and is in that person's mind a most disagreeable possibility. Through mere habit a similar condition of hurry may characterize that person's walking, eating, writing—in short, everything he does, and will render it more and more difficult for such person to act with coolness and deliberation.

The quality of mind or emotion underlying all this hurried mental condition and consequent hurried act, is fear. Fear is but another name for lack of power to control our minds, or, in other words, to control the kind of thought we think or put out.

It is this kind of unconscious mental training (which is very common), that begets a permanent condition of mind more and more liable to large and small panics at the least interruption or trivial disappointment. It makes disappointments when none are necessary. It is the ever-opening wedge letting in more and more the thought current of fear. For if you so cultivate fear of one thing you are cultivating and increasing liability to fear in all things. If you allow yourself to sit in fear for half an hour that the carriage may not call for you in time to get to the boat or train, you are much more liable to be seized with a series of little panics at every trivial occurrence or obstacle occurring on that particular journey.

In this way does this habit of mind enter into and is cultivated in the doing of so-called little things. You are writing or sewing, or engaged in the performance of some work which is intensely interesting to you, and in which you do not like to be interrupted. If sewing, you reach for your scissors which have dropped on the floor. You do this in a momentarily impatient mood and with a spasmodic jerky action. Your mind, as the phrase runs, is "on your work." You will not take it off your work while reaching for the scissors. You are trying in mind to go on with your work and reach for the scissors at the same moment. You make the movement of muscles and the action of the body momentarily disagreeable and irksome, because you refuse for the second to put into that act the force which it demands. When

unconsciously you refuse to do this, any act will become irksome and disagreeable, because there is not force enough let on to do the act with ease. It is the endeavor to do it with a weak body. You have the power of throwing your force instantly into any muscle, so making the act easy and pleasant. This capacity for turning on force on any part you will increase through cultivating it. And you can do a great deal more and do it better through this cultivation of deliberation, for deliberation can be as quick as thought, the more the mind is trained in that direction.

If you pick up a pin or tie a shoestring in a hurry, you do so not only because such act is irksome to you, but because you fear it may deprive you momentarily of some bit of pleasure. There you have again opened your mind to the thought current of fear—fear of losing something.

The cultivation of courage commences in the cultivation of deliberation in so-called little acts like these. Deliberation and courage are as closely allied as fear and hurry. If we do not learn to govern our force properly in the doing of the smallest act we shall find such government far less easy in the doing of all acts.

If we analyze what we fear, we shall find we are in mind trying to deal with too much at once of the thing feared. There is only a relatively small amount to be dealt with now. In any transaction—in the doing of anything there is but one step to be taken at a time. We need to place what force is necessary, and no more on that one step. When that is taken we can take the next.

The more we train our minds so to concentrate on the one step, the more do we increase capacity for sending our force all in one given direction at once. Such force extends, and should be so used in the so-called minutest details of everyday life.

In this way deliberation and deliberate action become habitual, and we are in a sense unconscious of making ourselves deliberate, even as after long training in the opposite and wrong direction we are unconscious of putting on the hurried frame of mind.

Timidity is often the result of looking at too many difficulties or terrors at once. In material reality we have to deal with but one at a time.

If we are going to what we fear will be a disagreeable interview with a harsh, irascible, over-bearing person, we are apt to go, occupying our minds with the whole interview, setting ourselves down in the very middle of it, and seeing it in mind as necessarily trying or disagreeable. Perhaps we were thinking of it this morning while we were dressing. But it was then our proper business to dress. To dress was a necessary step for the interview and to dress well also. Possibly it occupied our thoughts while eating. But it was then our proper business to eat and get all the pleasure possible from our food. That was another step. The more reposeful our eating, the more vigorous will become our taste, and the more strength will our food give our bodies. Possibly the fear of this interview was on us as we walked to the place appointed for it. But it was then our proper business to walk and get from our walking all the pleasure we could. That was another step. Pleasure is the sure result of placing thought or force on the thing we are doing now, and pain of some sort in both present and future is the certain result of sending thought or force away from the act which needs to be done at this moment. When we dress, eat, walk or do anything with mind placed on something else, we are making the present act irksome; we are training to make every act irksome and disagreeable; we are making the thing feared a certainty, for what we put out in thought as unpleasant is an actual thing, a reality. And the longer we continue to put it out the more force we add to it, and the more likely is it then to be realized in the physical world.

To bring us what all want and are seeking for, namely—happiness, we need to have perfect control of our mind and thought at all times and places. One most important and necessary means for gaining this, lies in this discipline regarding so-called little or trivial things, just as the discipline and movement of an army commences with the training of the private soldiers' legs and arms. If you hurry and slur over these so-called petty details, you are the easier thrown off your guard or confused at unexpected occurrences, and in life it is the unexpected that is always happening.

We need to keep always our mind present with us. We want it always on the spot ready to use in any direction. Our thought is not

on the spot when we tie a shoestring and think a mile from that shoestring—when we mend a pencil and dwell in one of tomorrow's cares. It is then away, and if it has for a lifetime been in the habit of so straying from the act in hand to the act afar off, it becomes more and more difficult to bring it back to use, and more difficult to use it promptly when it is brought back. Our thought moves from one thing to another with more than electric speed, and we can unconsciously train this quickness to be ever darting from one thing to another until it becomes almost impossible to keep it on one thing for ten consecutive seconds. On the contrary, through cultivation of repose and deliberation in all things we can train ourselves to mass and fasten our thought on anything as long as we please, to throw ourselves into any mood of mind we please, and to throw ourselves at will into sleep or a semi-conscious, dreamy state as restful as sleep. These are very small parts of the possibilities for the human mind. There is no limit to its growth or the increase of its power, and no thing coming within the limits of our imagination but can be accomplished by it. The steps to these attainments are very small, very simple and relatively easy—so simple and easy that some reject them for that reason.

Unquestionably, these powers and many results coming of their exercise were known ages ago to a relative few. But any power or any condition of mind consequent upon it can be made more clear to an English-speaking people, through the use of an English word or form of expression than by terms taken from other languages.

The North American Indian and the Oriental had in cases the power of so dismissing all thought and making their minds in a sense a blank as to become not only insensible to fear, but this mental condition rendered their bodies almost insensible to physical suffering. It was the power of inducing this mental condition which enabled the Indian when taken captive to withstand every device of torture inflicted by his captors, and to sing his death song under the infliction of fire and a slow process of bodily mutilation too horrible for description, and which very few of our race could endure without passing into the frenzy of agony.

The Indian is far more reposeful and deliberate than the majority of our race, in both mental and physical movement. Unconsciously

cultivating this repose, and living a life less artificial than ours, he increased his spiritual power, one sure result of which is that command of mind over body which can lessen physical pain, and as an ultimate possibility banish it altogether.

Deliberation of movement, or in plainer English movement of muscle so slow that our mind has time to follow it, gives one time to think in great and small emergencies. But the lack of such training causes unconscious physical action. So confirmed becomes this habit, that the body moves ere we are aware of it. Awkwardness, lack of address, lack of tact are all due to this lack of command of mind caused by lack of deliberation, or in other words, a trained incapacity for taking time to think or plan the proper thing to do.

The terror-stricken person if the ship seems in sudden danger runs up and down the deck to no purpose, and this physical action is an exact correspondence of the lifelong condition of his mind whose thought has been ever so darting from one thing to another, just as the whim seized him.

The more deliberate person whose mind is trained to take time to think and hold or concentrate its thought, holds himself steady, and so gives himself time to see what may be the opportunities for escape. And these two persons would pick up a pin in a very different manner and with very different mental action and method.

To train then for courage is to train for deliberate movement in all things, for that is simply training to mass and hold your force in reserve and let out no more than is needed for the moment.

No quality of mind is more needful to success in all undertakings than courage, and by courage I mean not only courage to act but courage to think. In everyday business, thousands dare not think of taking a step which would involve an outlay of money above the average of their expenditure. They are appalled at mention of so large a sum. They will not, out of pure fright, entertain the idea long enough to familiarize themselves with it. Now if they reversed this mental action, and instead of immediately giving way out of lifelong habit to this fright, would take time and allow the thought to rest in their minds instead of driving it out, there would in time come to them ideas concerning ways and means for meeting the additional

expense, and thereby making a larger sum of money in the same time it took to make the small sum.

For instance, you say to the woman who goes out to wash by the day and has never done anything else. "Mrs. A., why don't you start a laundry? You can make a great deal more money in so doing."

"I start a laundry! Where in the world is the money coming from to start a laundry?" is her reply. Here the woman instead of entertaining your idea gives way immediately to fright concerning what seems to her the immense sum required, and following the same unreasoning, headlong, panicky style of thought, sets up in a moment an opposition to your proposition. She dare think only of working for day's wages as she is called upon by those who hire her. And thousands for this reason dare not think, or find it disagreeable for them to think, of getting into some broader, more responsible and more profitable sphere of business, because they bunch at once all its possible difficulties into a mass, and out of mere habit will look only at that awful and imaginary bunch.

But Mrs. C., the more deliberate washerwoman, hears your proposition and entertains it. In time she says to herself, "Why should I not start a laundry? Other people have and have succeeded." She lives in the idea, talks to one and another about it, and finds out how they started. The longer she keeps in this current of thought the more plainly does she see the ways and means by which other people have "set up for themselves." Finally, the idea so grows upon her, that she takes some step toward that end, and then another and another, and so by degrees drifts into the business.

A person is cool and collected in face of any great danger, because he has the power of holding his mind to the thing to be done on the instant. Cowardice has no such power, and can see in mind not only the source of danger, but a score of possible results which may or may not happen to him. In battle one man may attend to his duty with a vivid and by no means agreeable condition of mind as he sees men struck and mangled all about him. But the force or thought he can bring to bear on the performance of his duty is greater in amount than that coming of the realization of the slaughter around him, and commands and holds his body to his post. The man who runs, or

would if he had the chance, cannot fix his mind on anything but the fearful possibilities of the moment.

In the so-called trivial act of picking up a pin, or threading a needle, or opening a door, I do not argue that *all* one's force or thought should be placed on the act, but only enough to perform the act well while the rest is kept in reserve. It is in substance the same as in picking up a weight, you would not try to expend the force in lifting one pound that you would in lifting fifty pounds. You do expend a great deal more force in the act of picking up a pin when your mind is preoccupied with something else, for you are then trying to do two things or lift two weights at once.

You will remember that anything which is done in mind, expends quite as much force as if done with the body, so that the persons who linger abed in the morning and think with dread of the breakfasts to be cooked, or the rooms to be swept, so far as expenditure of force is concerned, will be doing those acts then and there while lying on their backs.

In expending just force enough to perform any act (a capacity which will gradually grow upon you as you familiarize yourself with this idea and set your desire or demand upon it), you cultivate and increase continually that desirable state of mind, which in everyday language is known as "having your wits about you." That means, in other words, always having, no matter what you are doing, your mental eyes open in every direction, and while outwardly you seem all intent and occupied in the one act, your mind or spirit like a vigilant sentinel is continually on the look-out, so as to give you notice in the fractional part of an instant of all that is going on about you, and also to direct you how to meet the event whatever it may be. This is not only the characteristic of courage, but of tact and address. It was this electric vigilance and mind watchfulness that gave an American officer during the Revolution, who, in the confusion of battle, suddenly found himself in front of a British regiment, the deliberation to ask, "What troops are these?" "The Royal Scots," was the reply. "Royal Scots remain as you are," was his answer, and he rode off to his own lines. That man had a mind trained to give him time to think.

On one occasion, Mrs. Farren, the celebrated English actress, discovered where her part required her to hem a handkerchief that the property man had forgotten to lay out the handkerchief needle, thread, etc. Without a moment's hesitation she sat down and imitated so naturally the motion and manner of a lady in sewing that most of her audience never suspected the omission. That act involved self possession, coolness, deliberation, presence of mind, courage. Do not all these terms imply a similar state of mind? A woman habitually hurried and flurried could not have done this, and I believe that when Mrs. Farren saw proper to pick up a pin, she did so in a much more deliberate manner than would the habitually hurried, flurried man or woman.

Cultivate deliberate act and movement in all things, and you lay more and more the solid foundation for courage, either moral or physical. But deliberate act does not always imply slowness. Just as thought moves with electric rapidity, so may it move the body when occasion requires, but the thought must be clearly planned, seen and outlined in mind before it is allowed to act on the body. It is so seen or planned, and so acts to use the muscles in the rapid thrust and parry of the skilled fencer, and similarly with the professional danseuse, in fact in all superior accomplishments, be they of painter, musician or other artist. These, however, in many cases, are but partial controls of mind. Outside of his art, the artist may have little mental control or deliberation, and as a result be "nervous" vacillating, easily disturbed, whimsical, and timid. The mind is our garrison to be armed at all points and disciplined to meet any emergency.

We deal with the making (or self-making) of whole men and women, whose minds are not cultivated all in one direction and neglected everywhere else. It is far better in the end to be growing symmetrically and to be finished so far as we have grown "all around," than to have our power all concentrated on one talent or capacity, and becoming what the world calls a "Genius." The inside history of Genius is often a sad one, and shows that it brought little happiness to its possessor.

Scores and hundreds of the little acts of everyday life, such as picking dropped articles from the floor, opening and shutting drawers, laying or reaching for articles on the toilet table, and attending to

minor details of dress, are done unconsciously in this hurried condition of mind, especially when some more important object engages our attention. We snatch, we clutch, we drive recklessly about in the doing of these things, and we weaken our bodies and become tired out, and finally "panicky," and easily frightened through this mental habit, for fear and cowardice slip in far more easily when the body is weak.

This habit cannot be changed in a day or a year when it has pervaded a lifetime. Neither can the ills, mental and physical, resulting from such habit, be cured immediately. There can be only gradual growth away from them.

If in reading this you feel convinced that there is "something in it," and feel also a conviction that some portion of it suits your own case, your cure has then commenced. Real conviction, the conviction that comes from within, never leaves one or stops working to get us out of the evil way and put us in the good one. It may seem buried and forgotten for seasons, and our erroneous habits may seem growing stronger than ever. That is not so. But as convictions take root we are seeing our errors more and more clearly. We forget that at one time we were blind and did not see them at all.

If this book brings to you a conviction of a long established error it is not I individually who bring or convince. It is only that I put out more or less of a truth, which takes hold of you and the chord of truth in you senses it. If I apply the torch to the gas-jet and light it, it does not follow that I make either the fire or the gas. I am only a means or agent for lighting that gas. No man makes or invents a truth. Truth is as general and widely spread and belongs to every individual as much as the air we breathe, and there is pleasure enough in being its torchbearer without presuming to claim the power of its Creator.

Above all demand more and more courage of the Supreme Power.