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LIVING AS A FINE ART.

A Series of Soul Culture Essays.

By H. H. Brown.

No. 8.

SOME PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS.

Be thyself. Nobler gospel never preached the Nazarene.

—[William Denton.]

Who so would be a man must be a nonconformist. I hope in these days we have heard the last of conformity and consistency. Let these words be gazetted and ridiculous henceforward. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own soul.

—[Emerson, in "Self-Reliance."]

Let it never be forgotten that the affirmation upon which all these lessons are based is: *I am Spirit!* In this affirmation lies *All*. In this affirmation these lessons are Truth. If this affirmation is not held, they are error, and of no benefit to the pupil. This affirmation is that of Deity in man. It is man affirming his own omnipotence.

Only principles born of this affirmation have been dealt with. They are all that is needed. They are "the current that knows its way." This current can and must be trusted.

The conscious application of these principles is conduct, is not that knowledge, which the race has had transmitted to it from the experiences of former generations. But Spirit is as ready now as in the past to bear human personality onward through joy and sorrow to that knowledge which is self-mastery.

These Principles of Spirit are the only reality. All else is but a manifestation of them, hence to know them is to know all. There are no "things", they are shadows

of Spirit. Yet "Things" are worshipped, feared, sought, adored, revered, owned, and obeyed, as if they were gods.

"Things are in the saddle
And ride mankind,"

says the prophet Emerson, whom to know and understand is life indeed.

Individuals are slaves to things, methods, rules, formulas, books, churches, creeds, laws, opinions, persons, bibles, priests, teachers, organizations, to the past, to their hopes of the future, to everything, except their own soul. Hence, no formulas or rules have been laid down, but warnings have been made against them as pernicious. Any authority is dangerous to soul development, even were it the angel Gabriel or a resurrected Jesus, he were a curse if he spoke by authority. And these wondrous metaphysical movements of the last few years, are in so many cases retarded by authority, and so many souls by this authority are thrown into prisons, that I declare unto you the noblest gospel, that of Individuality, and say: "Be thyself at all times and in all places." Accept the place you have, as the best you could have; your conditions as those best for you, and your reason as man a highest endowment; and your conscience as your "Thus saith the Lord"; then listen to all voices, read all books, love all men, and do as you feel in your love of truth and goodness, and you are doing God's best work, making a man of yourself.

You are thus in Liberty. And next after Love comes Liberty. No individuality without it.

Learn then to live from principle and you are *free*. You are "A king in every conflict, where before you crouched a slave."

When thus developed to consciously and intelligently choose that which his own perception tells him is right, then is Man self-controlled, is the Master of Fate, and that most masterful and wondrous line of Emerson's true in his life,

"And Conscious Law is King of Kings."

HABIT.

There are no *good* habits.—*Newcombe.*

Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to this and that; what is right is what is after my constitution and what is wrong is what is against it.—*Emerson.*

It is the purpose of these lessons to induce in the pupils a consciousness of living from within. When this consciousness is developed then principle controls life, and methods and habits cease. Life becomes spiritualized. "The current" flows unimpeded from the fount within Self, pure from the infinite ocean of the Indivisible *One*.

Therefore the ideal man is one who has no habits. He signs no pledges; he subscribes to no creeds or platforms; he makes no promises as to future conduct, but holds himself free, in love of Truth, to act in the "living present" as seems to him in that present fit. He trusts the God within, to act spontaneously, independent of all limitation.

Whatever is done from compulsion (and habit is a form of compulsion), has no moral significance. It is like the snow drift or direction of weathervane, unmoral. Enforced morality like enforced piety, cannot make truth or manhood. The prayers of Ingersol under threat of punishment did not make him religious; neither does the enforced chastity of monk and nun, or the compelled temperance under prohibitory law, make men and women chaste and temperate. It only removes from them the opportunities of expression in these directions, and makes them unmoral, sexless, and inhuman in these respects, only they who are chaste and temperate from principle, are virtuous.

Therefore Jesus said to the formalists, those whose habits were correct measured by the Jewish standard, "Beware, publicans and harlots shall go into the kingdom of heaven before you." The latter had developed through expression and suffering; the former had remained undeveloped through non-expression. Only the self-controlled are virtuous. Virtue does not consist in the act, but in the motive, the thought out of which the

act comes as an expression. No one controlled from without can claim virtue, any more than any other animal can so claim it. Habit, custom, education, fear of censure, or law, or public opinion, pass current, for virtue, but are the prohibition of virtue; for they retard expression which alone is virtue, when in line of conscience. That building which is supported by props from without, lest it fall, and that throne which is supported by bayonets, are weak; and so is that character which is maintained only by habit, custom or fear. Many a mother whose son had been the pride of her heart for his virtue in the country home, would die of grief, did she know how in the army as a volunteer he had demonstrated the folly of the home training of restraint and ignorance, by the wildest excesses. The reports of disease and death from the army do not always truthfully report the cause. The habits of the home do not protect in the midst of temptation, and good mother Nature comes in with suffering, to develop restrained and self-control: and the soldier boy, if less virtuous in eye of home and church, is more so in eye of God; for he has learned to act from an inner principle, to a degree he never would have learned otherwise.

No matter what the habit then it is bad for the development of the individual since it shuts out the opportunity for expression. The Soul Culturist must remember, that he has nothing to do with effects. He only cares that there be expression, an outlet to the soul, and when that outlet is free, "the current that knows its way" will bring happiness, health, success and power.

No matter what the habit and how good it may be for society, it may also be a bad one for society. For instance: Most of the so-called generosity of to-day is a thing of habit, and injures because it is not wise, it is from sentiment and not from principle.

Therefore the Soul-Culturist has no habits; he recognizes them as fetters, and only pledges himself to Truth and Love, promises to do each day as reason and conscience instinctively lead him: hence he is free to grow. They who "train up the child in the way he should go," destroy all spontaneity and thus destroy selfhood, by developing no self-respect, no self-reliance, and no self-control. They have a machine, that runs on the

graded track and the rails of custom and habit but not a *man*. Develop true and noble loves and desires, then actions will take care of themselves. Better by far act in defiance of the world's opinions, and suffer, and learn, than to stand inert, because of habit or fear or censure. Have a "Why" from within, then act, and live the Love, you profess for the True and the Good.

This be the affirmation: I am Spirit. I know the right because I love the Good. I know the way, because I love the True. I have the power, because Spirit is Infinite. I therefore will not think how to act, but act in this love, as freely as flowers bloom, and birds sing. I am a free child of Spirit and from Spirit I can do no wrong.

FOOD.

Eat what is set before you.—*Paul*.

He who lives as Spirit is conscious of his power to build his body into health and beauty out of whatever elements are most accessible, and will not trouble himself about his food as far as body is concerned; he will only seek that which gives him the most pleasure. That he may enjoy the pleasure of the most perfect expression he desires a bodily manifestation in harmony with the divine will, and he will build that expression from any and every food that is at the time accessible, but will never be a slave to any dish in desire or fear. He will affirm, "I am master and can from any food build my body into honor." He will then eat what is set before him.

The many hygienic movements now before the public and the many discussions as to what is, and is not the proper diet, he will ignore. They are all born of the affirmation of body; rise in the thought of subserviency of soul to body, and all control in body, and are hence pernicious in their effects, weakening man's control over the flesh. The great attention to physical culture is also open to the same charge, and is a retrogressive step in as much as the emphasis is by all, except the few

masters, conduct in the thought of body and is therefore evil to the Spirit. When it shall be seen and taught, that thought is power and true culture is to mold the body of thought, then no matter how much or what the drill, spiritual mastery is the result. Till then, we shall have the anomaly of physical culturalists suffering with disease, and athletes dying young. Only that culture which comes from the recognition of Spirit is of permanent benefit.

Why discuss the benefit of this exercise or this food? They are intellectual attempts to reach Spirit, and necessarily fail.

Why discuss the relative merits of meat and bread? Why analyze grain and fruit? Cannot the soul, all precient, that guides with unerring instinct the brute, guide by intuition the human soul if let alone by the intellect? It can and will, if left alone, choose rightly, and choose as it ever has in all its manifestations that which confers the most pleasure. We have authority for saying that the free soul in divine harmony, will not be hurt if it take any deadly thing. Believe this, and let the desire guide, and all is well. The soul knows what it wants when left alone. "Where will you stop?" I asked a young man who refused a dish he desired because it did not agree with him. And in answer to his questioning look I continued, "Is that the only thing you cannot eat?" "No," he replied. "Do you think it will be the last?" He did not answer, and I continued: "Day by day this inability will increase until you, like a well-known millionaire, may starve in the midst of food. Now where will you stop? Is it not as easy to stop now as it will be when you reached the point, that only a cracker can be taken? Now you have a right to eat and enjoy whatever you choose. You are giving your stomach that right, and I see it is becoming your tyrant. Now take your right and say to your servant stomach, I choose now! Do your work! And by the consciousness of your right and power ascend the throne of Self, or you are dethroned, and matter through death becomes victor. You can win the victory easy now."

Let each one eat that which he chooses and eat for the pleasure of eating; not from habit or appetite which

is habit, but from the spirit, and soon but little food will be needed and that of the simplest, but choose and eat, no matter what. If you want it, that is enough. If you fear to eat, then eat until you do not fear. Here you master or lose all self-control.

Burn every medical treatise and every work on hygiene, and all books that tell you what to do, or eat, and consider it an impertinence for any one to tell you what to eat, thus rise from your present slavery to stomach to the freedom of Spirit, and know for the first time the joy of living. Give all cranks with their theories of diet, etc., a cold shoulder; refuse to entertain the suggestion of injury from anything you *choose* to do, or eat and trust the soul to guide you, then health and power is yours.

"Oil that makes the face to shine," says the Psalmist, "and wine to gladden man's heart." Let there be a psalm in the heart and on the lips, as the bread is eaten and the wine drank, as the fruit and vegetable are partaken, or the "hog and hominy" are digested, and "the face will shine" with "gladness" and the heart will sing with praise.

DRESS.

"The apparel oft proclaims the man."—*Shakespeare.*

The apparel should at all times proclaim the man, and will, when the present unnatural, and hypocritical era is outgrown. Dress should as naturally be on man, the expression of the inner life, as it is on squirrel and jay. We rail at fashion, and well may do so when like Dyspepsia, Dress becomes the Master, and man the slave. Dress because the within demands it, as its expression and it is religion to do so. Dress for any other reason and it is a profanation of the temple of the Holy Ghost. Dress because it is fashion, because you desire applause, to outvie others, to ape a superior, to compete with the wealthy, or to show your taste, wealth or position, and you enter the kingdom of hell.

Dress because it is an expression of your love of beauty, because your desire calls for it, because you feel better spiritually, or for any reason that comes up from within, and dress is the way to the kingdom of heaven. The free soul will move with pride in fustian; the slave will degrade the purple. Spirit is God, and no tiara, or robe, can add to it dignity or beauty. The soul will give glory to the rags of a beggar, while the beggarly spirit will destroy even the luster of the crown.

Let the innate love of the beautiful express itself in robe and adornment. Beauty is as natural to man as to violet and robin, to kitten or leopard. The babe is always beautiful and so are children at play until mothers make them ugly in clean clothes and clean manners.

But in relation to dress always remember that the human body is the perfection of beauty. Nature's masterpiece in every way, in mechanic, power, beauty. It is the perfect expression of God. "God manifest in the flesh." It will adorn and make holy any thing or place. Naught can add to it. It is the one thing "altogether lovely" and he who approaches it comes to holy ground. Then let him lay off from his feet all sandals, ere he dare to tread thereon. It is the high altar of Spirit and only the incense of Truth and Love should burn thereon. But oh how profaned? As if unseemly it is hidden from sight. As a thing obscene it is tabooed in conversation, and its most sacred functions made the jest of the vulgar and the silence of the cultured. And to make up for this profanation, it is restrained by dress till it loses its beauty, and till the female portion unsex themselves, and man debases his sex by excess, until the creative power is turned to destroy, because body that is enthroned as king is nevertheless degraded in Thought, and Thought is the only creative power man possesses. Thus dress comes in as a makeshift, and an apology from man to himself, from the low position which his Thought, controlled by degraded passion, has reduced his body, by broadcloth and silk and jewel he would make a fit receptacle, since he presumes God did not, for his soul.

Now as the most beautiful expression of the *I am*, regard the body then to it, neither beauty nor grace can be added for it *is* beauty and grace. There is none else-

where, for man, in his thought, makes beauty and ugliness. His standard is himself. From the evolved beauty of soul his body is builded, and is as much beyond the beauty of bird and beast as his soul is beyond theirs on the road of evolution.

The human body then is adorned by nature with all the possible attributes of Divine Beauty, and no matter whether by cross or throne, in birth or baptism, in cradle or coffin, in sleeping or in procreation, it is beautiful and holy. If it is holy, or in any part concealed, let it be because some need of the soul is subserved in this concealment, or some part is too sacred, for the vulgar gaze; the veil is dropped before the Holy of Holies.

Let this be your thought of body and no matter what you do with it, you add to your expression through it, of the Beauty of Spirit, and whether you go to the wilds, and are clothed only with sunshine and wind, or are clad in silks of Cathay and jewels of India, a *man* is there and therefore there is God. As sunlight through the chalice makes it more beautiful, so Thought will shine through dress and make it beautiful.

As long as one is conscious of being dressed he is not well dressed. The painter Elihu Vedder says: "No one is well dressed, save when in bathing or masquerade." And here almost alone, in the experiences of life, is man free. In all the rest of his dress, he acts a lie, and nowhere does he lie worse, or lose his individuality more effectually through conformity, or through habit, than by his dress. Therefore many reformers become eccentric and outre in dress. Thereby their individuality is developed. But when dress has served its purpose in them in this line, they fall back as did Mrs. Bloomer and many a dress reformer since to the conventional dress. They wanted followers, not realizing that to advise one how to dress, is an interference and an impertinence that no self-respecting person will consciously allow, no matter how much they are unconsciously the slave of fashion.

Dress then in perfect freedom and in love of the beautiful. Adorn the body as devotee a sacred temple. Let no unholy thought be connected with that temple. All the functions, all the appetites, all its demands are

holy and from God, mandates of the soul. Heed them in love of beauty, and life will be in expression, divine.

And since for want of space I cannot elaborate here as I would, suffice it now to say; — extend this principle to the home, the grounds, to society and nation, and beauty will be, as she ever has been, man's redeemer.

SLEEP.

He giveth his beloved, sleep.—*Psalmist.*

To how many is sleep given as to a beloved? Thus it should alwas come from Spirit; as a gift from lover to his beloved. Now it is a habit, and comes as "tired nature's sweet restorer". Comes as the rest of slave, because body can, or will not, do without it. Body is king. Sleep comes to man as inheritance from brute, has never questioned the necessity of retaining this inheritance or of dropping it for something better. Because the ox sleeps is a reason why man should not. Man is a perfect manifestation of "the Father", and brute "is man on the way". Let the brute sleep. When *man* comes, let it be done away.

Sleep is a matter of habit. Everybody's experience tells this as to time. Spirit does not require it. And when Spirit is supreme it will not loose valuable time through the unconsciousness of bodily functions in sleep.

No matter how tired, the *suggestion of sleep and rest*, entertained only for an instant, will rest the hypnotic subject. It is just as potent if given to one's self. There is no need of bodily weariness if one will think rightly. Sleep is not needed, then to rest one, only as one is ignorant of his powers. Sleep is now the only time the Spirit has in which it retires from the life of the senses to the pure life of Spirit. This retirement is necessary. But by retiring into "The Silence", all that opportunity that sleep gives, is obtained, and there is no loss of consciousness, and consciousness will retain the experiences of that silence and all that knowledge what has been evolved in the silence becomes the experience also

of the external life. There need be no division as now, into the life of sense and of soul, for the self may master the body and be conscious every moment of its own existence, and know neither space or time in its manifestation.

This is the ideal, the real life toward which all soul culture brings;—the enlightened man. All distinctions end when the spiritual life is perfectly manifested either while in or after the death of the body. To gain the victory the habit of all sleep must be mastered, and voluntary silence take place. Silence must be courted till at will the bodily senses can be ignored, and the pure life of the Spirit be lived consciously, now as it will be, sometime by each soul after its bodily manifestation is forgotten.

In the silence then is the future life already found and through it, as the door, we enter the eternal life, and in their mastery find immortality.

DEATH.

O, Death, where is thy victory?—*Paul.*

It is fitting that this series of lessons on "Living as a Fine Art" should close with what Walt Whitman calls "the sweet, delicious word, Death," for that change in Life's manifestation is only the clearer manifestation of Life. The Soul Culturist has won the victory over the body the moment he is the Master of Fate and lives from the condition of matter, one has only to make that condition known as "in the silence" perpetual to be where all are, who have passed the change known as death, and also have either in sense or soul life, learned to live as Spirit. The "victory" is in the development of the spiritual powers, so that the soul life is the conscious life, here and now. To such, when the change of death comes, come it at his desire and will, as it will to the fully unfolded, or come it, as now, in a greater or less degree, involuntary, it will only be the complete emancipation from sense, and the entrance to the complete life of Spirit.

The ultimatum of Soul Culture is to so open spiritual faculties that one may die daily to sense, and be born daily to the real soul life. The Enlightened Man will live in the body only so long as is necessary to perfectly unfold his spiritual faculties. That accomplished, the body like the crysalis will be voluntarily left for the free life without it. This leaving will not be by any violent means or by disease, but by the gradual spiritualization of the body by the eliminating of the grosser particles, until the spiritual body (the soul) is freed, voluntarily as now it is freed by the long process of decay, and often by the longer process of unfoldment in the earth spheres of Spirit.

He who has learned to live as Spirit, will know no change for he *is* Spirit, and over Spirit, change, or death has no power. His clairvoyance gives him conscious association with all personalities whether in the sense or or in the soul life. His Inspiration gives him access to all needed Truth. By telepathy he converses with whom he choose among the intelligences of the universe, and his psychometry gives him all history of men and things as he may desire. Therefore he has consciously All at his command, and knows himself as God, and as the only personal God there is, an indivisible part of the impersonal God that is "in all, through all and over all." To such death is not. And only such have won the victory.

To such is the angel face that Stephen had as the light of Spirit bursted upon him. By right living that face is every man's. It lies beneath these masks of sense, and only waits the life "in the Silence" to manifest in beauty. By bright loving and thinking, it is possible to every one *now*. When it glows "Death is swallowed up in victory."

Then welcome the transformation, when the mortal becomes angel; when mortal becomes immortal, and corruptible becomes incorruptible; when from change and pain, and care, and sorrow and all the ills of sense, comes the Peace of Spirit on its entrance to the Nirvana of Self Mastery. When it can say "Let there be Light!" and there shall be Light.

O, take me, Death, I'm thine. Let me die daily
that I may be daily newborn to the real life of Spirit.

"Only through thy solemn portal
Can I reach the life immortal,
Where the amaranths unfading,
Brows of heavenly bloom are shading
Take me death I'm thine."

Such be the affirmation, "the valley and the shadow"
have passed away. I am Spirit! This affirmation has
been "His rod and staff." It has been "The resurrec-
tion and the life" and "who so cometh to know the
Father and to be one with him" comes by it. There is
but one way. It is the way of Spirit. It is the rule
laid down early in these Lessons. *Affirm you are Spirit:
live as if you were Spirit; and you shall come to know you
are Spirit.* This is wisdom; this is eternal life. But
this is not all; It is only the beginning of Life. You
have just begun to live. Have just found Liberty, and
now it is upward and onward forever.

"When I have lifted that heighth, shall I go onward
still? And my soul said: Yes, onward forever."

Here dear readers in the external we part company.
It has been a pleasant journey. Soul-linked we never
part. Often will we say:

"Soullike were those days of yore;
Let us walk in soul once more."

And whenever that cry comes, we are together, as helpers,
friends and companions. And as we go hence joyously,
may John Borough's "Waiting" be our psalm of life.

"Serene I fold my hands and wait,
Nor care for wind nor tide nor sea;
I rave no more 'gainst time or fate
For what is mine shall come to me.

I stay my haste, I make delays,
For what avails this eager pace?
I stand amid the eternal ways,
And what is mine shall know my face.

—[San Diego, Cal., Nov. 12th, 1898.

(THE END.)

OUR ANGEL IN HEAVEN,

— OR —

Love, the Greatest of All.

By P. Braun, Ph. D.

When Fritz had made all necessary arrangements preparatory to leaving the city, he thought of his friends. He could not leave without bidding some of them Good-Bye and explaining matters. He had never again tried to see the bishop or the rector of the cathedral. He felt that it would be useless. But he could not rest the case here. He must give it into the hands of the president of his singing society in whose friendship and good will he knew he could trust. He proceeded to this gentleman's place of business and had a somewhat prolonged interview with him. The latter promised to do all he could to vindicate Fritz in the eyes of the public. He hoped that Fritz would return to the city at a future day, and take up the leadership of the singing society again. When they finally parted it was nearly six o'clock. Fritz knew that he could not complete his other visits before 9 or 10 o'clock. He stepped therefore into a telephone office and asked for a messenger boy to whom he handed a note to Arda which he hurriedly wrote on a slip of paper. We know that Arda received this note.

He then proceeded on his way. It was eight o'clock when he rang the bell at the front door at Alma von Staden's residence. She was the last one he wished to see before he would return to the lonely watcher at home. Entering her sitting-room, he saw that she was entertaining another visitor who was eyeing him very sharply when he came in. Alma opened her lips to introduce the two gentlemen, when to her amazement she saw them rush forward with outstretched arms and embrace each other.

"Fritz von Wittenstein."

"Franz Weber," were the exclamations uttered simultaneously by the two.

Fritz then held his friend at arms length and scanned him from head to foot, as if he still did not trust his senses. He finally said: "Franz Weber, what on earth are you doing here in this wonderful land of liberty, and here, here—"

"Before the gentlemen make any explanations, I pray that they be seated," now interrupted the hostess who had recovered from her astonishment.

They followed her suggestion.

The man whom Fritz had addressed as Franz Weber took his former seat near the table and Fritz seated himself on the sofa where Alma soon joined him. She allowed the gentlemen to talk for awhile, then she reached for an empty wine-glass which she filled and offered to Fritz. The other gentleman's glass was still full. Fritz had not noticed what she was doing until she presented him with the glass filled to the brim with old fragrant Rhine wine.

Fritz set it down on the table as if the cool glass burned his fingers. Then he turned to his generous hostess with a smile and said:

"Thank you; but as long as there is life and breath in this body not another drop of wine, beer, or liquor shall pass over my lips."

As he spoke a strange pallor overspread his cheeks and his eyes looked sad. Alma felt instinctively that sorrow had come to him which must have stirred his soul to the center. The words of Fritz so solemnly spoken, filled her heart both with sympathy and gladness. She knew that sooner or later he must begin to live the higher life and come from under the control of the senses.

This baptism with water, which is the cleansing from outward imperfections, such as disease and immoral habits, must always precede the baptism with fire, or spirit, from within. Although she knew that the desire for a purification of character comes with the search for truth, the first sign of it in Fritz took her by surprise. In her usual free and easy way she gave expression to her feelings regardless of the interpretation which others might put on her actions. She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him on his cheek.

Alas, little either of the occupants of the apartment dreamed that two sad and jealous eyes were peering into the room from out of the darkness without. But this was the moment that Arda came to the house and departed again.

"For the victor a crown," smiled Alma. Fritz understood her. He longed to tell her of the great sorrow that had come into his life, but this was not the moment for a soul-to-soul conversation.

Why should the passing away of a little child make such a difference in his life? He had asked himself repeatedly. Yet there was the pain in his heart. The hearse with the little white casket passes daily through the streets of the great city, and one or the other in the crowd murmurs: "Only a little Child." Ah, little they know of the pain and sorrow its going has caused in the hearts of the parents in the closed hack behind that hearse.

For a moment all the agony of the past few days seemed to pass over Fritz in one mighty wave. He mastered it with a great effort and continued the conversation with his friend.

"So you heard my opera at the time it was given here?"

"Yes, and I was carried away with it. My impresario and myself were passing a few hours in the city between trains. I recognized you and would have given much to speak to you that evening. But we had a through-ticket to C. . . and were obliged to leave before the opera ended.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

DR. P. BRAUN

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