

MAN'S
UNDEVELOPED
POWERS

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AWAKENING LATENT MENTAL POWERS

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THE task set every individual life, — clear, insistent, final — is this: “Work out your own salvation,” physically, mentally, morally and spiritually. The assurance of ultimate victory is found in the truth, “For it is God who worketh in you.” In all reverence, God cannot accomplish man’s salvation alone; man cannot accomplish his salvation apart from God. The great goal toward which humanity has been tending from the beginning, man’s complete, all-around salvation, in all parts of his complex nature, is to be

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accomplished only through the co-operation of God and man; or better still, God in man. "Work out your own salvation, for it is God who worketh in you."

We have suggested some of the ways by which any individual, through the aid of the powers resident within, might learn to control his physical conditions and to a very large degree prevent sickness or disease from finding a lodging place in his life. Let us now go a step further and consider the wondrous powers of the sub-conscious mind over man's mental life, in the development of his latent possibilities.

In an article entitled, "The Energies of Men," published recently in the *Philosophical Review*, Professor James uses these words: "Most of us feel as if we lived habitually with a sort of cloud weighing upon us, below our highest notch of clearness in discern-

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ment, sureness in reasoning and firmness in deciding." Further on in the article, he describes how men from time to time, through various experiences, and chiefly by the aid of Suggestion, are enabled to "tap new levels of energy," and thus disclose in themselves forces of which they had been hitherto ignorant.

Professor James is here describing a common experience. We are all more or less conscious that we are not living up to our highest mental capacity; in our daily work we are not expressing our very best ability; when we undertake some enterprise we do not see it through with that measure of power, of which we believe ourselves truly capable. How many times we come to the end of the week, or reach the completion of some task with the regretful feeling, that if we could only retrace our steps and try it over again, we

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should succeed much better. Then, there do come times to everyone of us, when we seem to break through this "cloud that rests upon us so habitually," when we are lifted to higher planes of mental activity, when we can command our mental resources as we do not ordinarily. Then it is that we are able to do our work with a facility, an ease, a precision, an effectiveness, that causes us to marvel at our own skill and power. After such an experience we naturally ask the question, "Why have I been able to do so easily and successfully what, at another time, I would have done laboriously and most unsatisfactorily? If at some times I am conscious of possessing such powers, why not at all times?" The answer lies in our ignorance of ourselves and the laws of our mental being. We all do "tap levels of new energy" at times, and that we cannot do so

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habitually, is due to our ignorance of the powers and capacities with which we are all endowed, and which need only to be called forth and developed.

A young man called recently and told me of his past life. He had lacked the advantages of an education in his early youth and had gone to work while quite a lad. In the course of the conversation, he said, "In these last few years I have awakened, and come to see why I have failed, why I don't get along faster, why I am not more successful in my daily work." And then touching his head, he said, "The trouble is here; it is with my mind. I did not have the chance to study. I am not educated. I do not know how to use my mental powers; and as I compare myself with other men I feel the handicap of my mental limitations." How often we experience the same feeling as we come into the presence of

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the trained mind, with all its faculties at command, exhibiting in its work a power and skill that calls forth our greatest admiration. There is no more laudable ambition in life, than the ambition for personal power. Every earnest person pauses now and then, to ask the vital question: "How can *I become more powerful and effective*; how command supplies of available energy adequate to my need?"

I might bring you specific instances of the way in which different individuals throughout the world have employed the power of the sub-conscious mind to develop themselves intellectually, and thus made possible a more effective and successful life. Dr. Coste de La Grange, a prominent French physician, who has been working in this field of investigation for years, tells of the way in which he experimented upon himself with auto-sug-

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gestion. He was called upon frequently to attend social functions. Such affairs were to him as unattractive as they are to most men. He was a ready enough conversationalist in his office or with men of his own profession, but elsewhere he was a dismal failure. So he tried the power of auto-suggestion, and found, as he states in an address before scientific men in Paris, that the conversational powers which seemed to be denied him in the social atmosphere, were given him in an unusual degree, and he attained a fluency and ease that he had never deemed possible. He had an ambition to write, but when he attempted to put his thoughts on paper, he found it impossible to write more than a dozen lines, and even these were far from satisfactory. Once again he tried, suggesting to himself that he should have an abundance of ideas and that he should be able to express them

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in an attractive form. To his surprise after practising in this way, he found he could write for hours at a stretch with the greatest ease. I might remind you of Voltaire, who tells us that more than once when confronted by problems in his literary or philosophical work, which he found himself incapable of solving, he had gone to sleep only to awaken in the morning to find the difficulty removed, or his problem solved.

Coleridge tells us how again and again, some of his most beautiful verses came to him during the hours of sleep, after he had striven laboriously in his waking hours, but to no effect. All the great writers bear witness to the same experience. The mathematicians tell us that in solving mathematical problems, that which could not be done in the waking hours has often been accomplished while asleep.

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But it is not my purpose to dwell upon such specific cases, or describe the way in which the sub-conscious mind has operated to make mental effort more successful. I desire rather, to point out some of the general principles, by conforming to which every individual, no matter who he is or where he stands, may be able to call upon these inner forces for his own larger mental development. Once again, the first thing for us to realize, is the fact of our close relation to the Infinite and Universal energy from whence all power proceeds. We may think of energy or force, as being absolute and universal. It is the same energy that manifests itself in all the myriad forms of life; that expresses itself in various and wonderful organisms; that is manifested in the life of the trees, the flowers and the grass; in the life of the animals, the birds, the

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fishes, and the reptiles; that finally reveals itself in man's complex being — a being so wonderful, that as we study him, we are fairly amazed at the ease and power with which he is able to direct this stream of energy that flows through his being.

We are all naturally proud. We like to think of ourselves as the originators of power; we like to believe that we create energy of various kinds. But as a matter of fact, no man, strictly speaking, creates energy. He is simply a specialized transmitter of the Universal Energy, of God's powers. Let me bring an illustration from the field of electricity. No scientist can tell what electricity is. Various definitions have been attempted, but they all fall short of the reality. If you were to talk with the electrician in his laboratory, you might say, "It is marvelous how you have been able to harness electricity

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and make it serve your commands," and he would reply, "You mistake the facts entirely. Electricity does not serve me. I am not the master of electricity. I am its servant. Electricity is the master. All that I have done or can do, is simply to observe the phenomena, to study the laws, and then to create certain conditions by means of which *it may please* electricity to express itself. I construct this piece of machinery, and then if it pleases, electricity may manifest itself and I obtain the current in my machine. But I am simply electricity's servant." In much the same relation do we stand to the Infinite Energy of the universe. We do not originate or create any energy whatsoever; we are but the servants, the instruments which this energy uses; we are the channels through which this energy is transmitted. We may, because of our individualized powers, our

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personalities, our own wills, turn it into this or that channel; we may apply it wisely or misdirect it foolishly, but the source of all energy is ever the same. Infinite energy is in us and streams through us, while we seek to give it adequate expression through the various functions of mind and body. Our chief concern, then, should be to perfect the mechanism, and keep the organism in good working order, with soul, mind and body so skillfully attuned, as to provide a free channel for the noblest expression of this Eternal Energy. If we are to realize to the full our inner resources of power, we must learn to think more and more continually of our intimate relation to the Infinite Energy. Realizing this, no one is limited in any absolute sense, and the possibility of "tapping new levels of power," is always ours, for the supply is inexhaustible.

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We need also to recognize that each of us is capable of the highest and best in the range of mental activity. Think for a moment, of the wonderful way in which man is being revealed to himself to-day. We talk about the new knowledge of nature that has been disclosed to us in the last century of scientific investigation; but the *newest* of the New Knowledge and by far the greatest, is the New Knowledge of Man. And this *new land* of Man is being explored by the daring Columbuses of our own time, as it never has been explored in the past. Think of what man has accomplished. When he first came into existence upon this planet he found only a wild, trackless, undeveloped wilderness. All the arts and industries, all tools and machinery, have been developed by man. Every institution that exists in the world to-day, — educational, political, religious, — has

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been thought out and then wrought out by man. All sciences, all philosophies, all literature — yea, the very language which he speaks, are the result of man's creative thought. Compare the life as it is lived in a city like New York with the life in the old Colonial days of this country. Picture the private houses and the public buildings, the multitude of conveniences and comforts, the transportation, lighting and heating facilities, the telegraph and the telephone, — the things which we are all using to-day with scarcely a thought, and then remember that they were all unknown and undreamed of, one hundred years ago. It is man who has wrought these wonders. As the old astronomer said, when he turned his telescope towards the starry heavens, "the greatest wonder of all is the being at the small end of the telescope, — the man who has invented the telescope and brought

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these unseen worlds into our range of vision; who weighs them, explores their substances and measures their distances.

When we turn to man's achievements in special fields of human activity, we find in the realm of music such names as Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Liszt, Rubenstein and Paderewski; in art, Phidias, Raphael, Angelo, Rembrandt, Corot and Millet; in invention, Watt, Morse, Stephenson, Fulton, and Edison; in the realm of poetry, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Tennyson and Browning; in the realm of discovery and exploration, Columbus, Cook, Livingston and Peary; in science, Newton, Galileo, Copernicus, Humboldt and Darwin; the renowned orators, Demosthenes, Cicero, Burke, Gladstone and our own Phillips. Think of the deep wisdom of the prophets, philosophers and seers, Plato, Isaiah,

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Kant, Hegel and Emerson; of the illustrious leaders of mankind, Moses, Luther, Cromwell, Washington, Lincoln; yes, of the religious leaders and saviours of the world, Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, and, greatest of all, because He leads them all, both by what He was in Himself and by what He taught, Jesus of Nazareth. How sublime these lives, how glorious their achievements! It ought to lift our hearts to the highest pitch of enthusiastic gratitude, just to think what men have accomplished in the world.

But what shall we think of the other lives? Are these we have mentioned, these geniuses of humanity, composed of exceptional clay? Do they belong to an exclusive class that the rank and file of men and women need never expect to enter? The old saying that we generally use in a disparaging sense, "Human nature is about the same the

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world over," can be applied in a vastly higher sense, "Human nature *is* the same the world over." All men have like faculties, like powers, differing only in degree but not in kind. In every soul there is the germ, the inborn capacity, the latent ability, that might, if opportunity and time were afforded, unfold into the philosopher, the poet, the artist or the musician. Every man is, in embryo, a possible hero, or prophet, or seer, or saint; all that is needed is the opportunity and the time for development. Human nature *is* the same. What one man can do, or has done, reveals an open door that all other men may enter. Whatever any man possesses must be potential in all others. This is the great significance of the Life Beyond. We shall not be translated through the experience of Death to "seats of everlasting bliss," but we shall enter spheres of existence, where

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we must continue to unfold our latent powers, continue our growth and development, as perhaps we never had opportunity in this world, or else were too indifferent or ignorant to seize, when it came. And that will be Heaven for you and for me. Nothing less than that could ever satisfy the awakened soul of man.

When one begins to think of himself in this way, as essentially one with these greatest and noblest of earth; when he begins to recognize that he is himself capable of the highest and best attainments, he is taking a long stride towards the realization of power in his own life. We need no one else to tell us why we fail and come short of the highest. We have not confidence in our own selves, in our own ability and powers. We belittle ourselves and constantly underrate our abilities. If we are given a task, at once we say,

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“ Well, I am afraid I can't do that.” We attempt to solve some problem, with the thought at the very outset, that perhaps we shall fail. We enter some new employment, with the fear or misgiving that we shall not be able to give satisfaction. We are failing a dozen times every week, because we have not enough faith in our power to do the thing, and to do it better than anybody else in God's world. But with the new light gained, we can no longer honestly tarry in the atmosphere of disparagement and self-belittling; we can no longer complain because we have not been born as others, or endowed with different powers and faculties.

Read the lives of the great geniuses — follow them from the cradle to the glorious heights of success, and then take to your own heart the lesson. Most of these great ones of earth have

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come out of poverty, through hardships, trials and privations of every kind. The greatness they attained was not won easily, or suddenly, but by dint of hard, prodigious labours, through the greatest sacrifices, by most persistent efforts, centered in one direction. The men and women whose names we reverence in literature, carried their manuscripts from publisher to publisher, only to meet rebuff or refusal. Over and over again did they re-write and re-polish their material; and only at last, oftentimes not until after their death in direst poverty, was their greatness recognized. Greatness is always arrived at slowly, — through struggle and toil, through pain and sacrifice, in loneliness and grief. I am not so sure but that the only genius is the genius for hard and unremitting work. Few of the geniuses were born with the golden spoon in their mouths, or with

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some great faculty already developed. It is not the precocious child that turns out the man of genius; usually, he is forgotten, ere he emerges from his teens. Thank God! that these great lives are of the same mould as ours; and if they have attained heights and developed powers that we know nothing about, it is not because the same powers do not exist in us; it is rather because they have worked as we have not, they have come to understand themselves and learned how to call forth their powers, while we have only skimmed life's surface; they have not been content with anything but the highest and best, while we are satisfied with the paltry mediocre. If we are going to be saved mentally, — for God is seeking to save men mentally, as well as morally and spiritually, — it will be because we *will* to work out our own salvation through confidence in our-

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selves, because we believe in our power and ability to achieve only the highest.

The next necessity, if we are to realize an increase of power in our lives, is that we shall do some clear, definite and accurate thinking about ourselves. The old Greek philosopher was right, when he said that the most important knowledge was the knowledge of oneself, and yet it seems as if this is the branch of knowledge in which we are most deficient. We must know ourselves, if we are to grow along the lines of power. We need to analyze ourselves; to sit down and confront ourselves as we might another individual. We must discover whether the intellectual or the emotional or the volitional temperament predominates in us. We need to ask the question, "As I go through life do I *see* things, or do I *think* things?" Most of us only see things, and do little or no real thinking. John

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Ruskin says somewhere, that the reason we all cannot sit down with pencil and paper, and draw a horse, is because we have never really *thought* a horse; we have seen thousands of horses, but the man who can draw a horse and put the curves where they ought to be, and make the picture look like the living animal, is the man who not only sees, but thinks the horse.

Ask the question, "Am I merely looking with everybody else, or am I perceiving clearly and definitely the actual conditions, facts and experiences in my every-day life?" Discover whether you are strong or weak in translating your thoughts into action. It may be that you belong to the class of Amiel and Joubert, wonderfully talented and cultivated men, and yet, to the amazement of all their friends, they never accomplished anything worthy their powers. As Saint Beuve

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said of Joubert, he lived in the region between "The Time-has-not-come-yet" and "The Time-has-passed." His friends repeatedly asked him, "When are you going to write the great book?" His reply invariably was, "The time has not arrived yet." The years rolled on and at last his pathetic answer to their questionings was, "The time has passed." Multitudes of men are in the same tragic class. We have talents enough and time enough and ability enough, God knows, but we fail in the actual *doing*. Find out whether your mental life is simply expending itself in the thin air of desires and plans and hopes, while you dawdle and procrastinate till at last you, too, will be obliged to sadly say, "The time is passed. I have lost the opportunity for accomplishing what I might have done." Take an exact inventory of your attainments, and thus come to know yourself.

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Draw the line about your strong points and underline your weak points. Find out what your limitations are. Be glad of the things that you can do and do well, and then face honestly the things where you fail, the work you bungle. When you come to such clear knowledge of yourself, you are in a position to begin effective work in self-development and in overcoming failings or weaknesses.

The first requirement is that one should possess the maximum of mental control. I have emphasized the need of mental concentration in all of life, if we would achieve results. It is especially true in this realm of our intellectual powers. We have taken the burning glass and placed a piece of paper on the table and let the sun's rays fall directly upon it, with the result that the paper is merely warmed; then by focusing the sun's rays on one definite spot, we can so concentrate them

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that the intense heat burns a hole in the paper. The power of concentration is as true of man's intellectual life as it is of the sun's rays. Most of us have never learned how to focus our mental powers on one thing for any length of time. If you were to walk down the street, and ask the first thousand people you met to concentrate their minds to the exclusion of everything else on some one idea for a single minute, you would not find twenty-five who could do it. That is why we fail in the development of our latent mental powers. We do not know how to control our thoughts. The result is that they wander here and there, like the will-o'-the-wisp, darting first in one direction and then in another. If you are discussing with a friend some religious or political topic, by and by you say, "Well, I don't know; it may be that you are right," and there you

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drop the conversation. This is where most of us leave any serious train of thought, — in the air. Did you ever think what a confession of mental weakness it is? No man ought to stop short of conclusions in his thinking. Think the subject out to some end. It makes no difference whether you arrive at the conclusions of others, but, at any rate reach some conclusions of your own. What would become of the workman, who began a piece of work, and in a few moments took up something else, and then something else, etc.? His services would not be required very long. And yet in our mental life we keep wandering from subject to subject, from field to field; and even after we have analyzed ourselves, and see clearly the strong and weak places in our mental life, we lack the power to concentrate on the things so sadly needed.

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There are three men in history, well worth studying for their remarkable powers of mental control. Napoleon was one of the greatest men intellectually, of whom history speaks. His biographers tell us that naturally he was of a very sympathetic, humane and generous nature, and yet, if that be true, there were many times when he could absolutely exclude every such thought, and become as cold and hard as steel. He tells us himself that he used to keep every subject in a separate compartment of his mind, and he said, "I never let them get mixed; when I am working on one particular subject I am working with the contents of that particular compartment, and not of any other." After he had prepared for a campaign, he could throw the matter off his mind completely. At Jena he slept on the ground while the battle was raging. At Austerlitz, after he had

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made the final preparations for battle, he lay down on the straw in a little hut and fell asleep as peacefully as a child. Therein lies the secret of the greatness of Napoleon. Mr. Smalley, one of the recent biographers of Gladstone, tells us that the mental characteristic which lay at the foundation of Gladstone's great career, was his ability to exclude from his mind everything but the subject immediately in hand. Jacob Riis in his Story of President Roosevelt states that in his judgment the secret of Roosevelt's success or greatness as a man lies in his power to shut everything out of his mind except the one thing he is considering. Mr. Roosevelt himself tells us that he is not a great man, that he is possessed of no special intellectual ability, that he has no exceptional knowledge. In view of these statements, it would seem that the secret of Mr. Roosevelt's

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power to do things, to bring things to pass while other men theorize and talk, is found in his powers of mental control. Amid the wild excitement, at the close of the Convention which placed him in the Vice-President's chair, Albert Shaw says that Mr. Roosevelt sat in an inner room quietly reading Thucydides.

There is nothing in all the world that would mean more to our lives mentally, physically and morally than to persistently practice, with all the strength we possess, the power of controlling our minds, by excluding all other things, and concentrating our thoughts and desires upon those elements of strength which we wish to attain.

This is the key to the whole problem of mental development, — that we shall learn how to live continually in the presence of the thoughts or faculties

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which we earnestly desire to see developed in ourselves. If a person aspires to become an artist and is dead in earnest, he seeks out the living artists, and gets as close to them as he can; he reads the biographies, and studies the pictures of the great artists of the past—in a word, he *lives* in the realm of Art. If a man wants to attain success in the commercial world he observes the lives of successful merchants; he touches as many of these lives personally as he can, studies their methods and tries to discover the secret of their power. He *lives*, in his thinking, in the realm of business or commerce. If a man desires to develop himself along any line whatsoever, the secret of his ultimate success will be found in this, that he has the determination and persistency to live constantly in the presence of his Supreme Ambition. When

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the conscious mind can see clearly the kind of power and mental force required, and impresses that idea upon the sub-conscious, with the deepest and strongest desire for its realization, the impression thus made will call forth, in time, the power and intelligence required.

The law is this: "The sub-conscious will respond with the exact quantity and quality, that you were conscious of, or that you mentally discerned, at the time the impression was made." It is, therefore, extremely important to elevate the conscious mind into the largest and most superior states of thought and feeling possible, before the effort is made to impress the sub-conscious. Thus to live constantly in the deep interior feeling of greater power, greater intelligence, greater personal worth and greater mental brilliancy, is to constantly call upon the

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sub-conscious to produce these things in ever larger measure.

We have gone far enough in human development, and have explored sufficiently in this "new country" of man, to say without exaggeration, that the possibilities for human development here on this planet, not to speak of the future, are practically limitless. Any individual can be, in time, what he earnestly desires to be, if he but set his face steadfastly in the direction of that one thing and bring all his powers to bear upon its attainment.

The power of auto-suggestion in the matter of solving special problems, or making critical choices, in the desire to obtain unusual brilliancy for some special task, or in developing the faculty of memory, has been demonstrated again and again. There is nothing so ordinary, so trivial in everyday life concerning which you cannot

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or should not call upon your inner powers for help. Above all things let us remember that whatever special end we may have in view, our daily, yes, hourly motto must be, to *aim higher*. As we fall asleep each night let it be in the thought, "It matters not how well or how poorly I did my work to-day, I will be more successful, I am going to do more effective work to-morrow." Let your thoughts of power always lead your actual expression of power. Never allow yourself to be satisfied with what you are doing.

The complete salvation which God has planned for every man is a salvation of his all-around nature. God is seeking to save man physically and mentally, as well as morally and spiritually, by teaching him that it is God who works in, as man works out. Every vision of truth we catch, every particle of power we gain, all the light that

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shines on our pathway, is to be employed by us in attaining this perfect symmetry of life and character. Let us ever remember, that into the Life Beyond we must carry *ourselves*, nothing else but ourselves. The external gains we make here, of wealth and position and fame, must all be left behind when we pass the portals of Death. Shall we carry a Self just emerging from its infancy, mentally, morally and spiritually, or shall we go into that clearer light of the Eternal Day having developed to the full the powers resident within us, there to continue our growth and development, forever and ever? Let us be so in earnest with ourselves, let us realize so clearly that "all things are ours," because we are God's, eternally His, that every step we take shall be a step forward into ever-increasing power, "till the clouds break and the shadows forever flee away."

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF CHARACTER

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THE words of Jesus, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the teaching," might be translated so as to read, "Whoever really and earnestly chooses to do right and perseveres in that attitude, shall learn how." The problem of problems in moral development is this problem of the *how*. All of us are familiar with the ideals of moral character, but how to realize these lofty ideals in ourselves and in Society is the supreme question. The inner life of every individual presents a battle ground for opposing forces. No

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one of us is either wholly good or wholly bad. We are all sometimes good, and sometimes bad. We know that we are possessed of impulses good, and impulses evil, of tendencies upward and tendencies downward. There are times when we carry ourselves with a pride and arrogance that is an offence and injury to our friends; there are other times when we live the quiet, humble and unobtrusive life. We are sometimes selfish and at other times unselfish. There are days when we are able to live serenely in the higher reaches of our nature, when our thinking and our actions find beautiful expression on the high plane of the Spirit; and then there are other days when we seem to drop to lower planes where thoughts, words and deeds are unworthy our manhood and womanhood. How often we say in wonder and sad regret, with the Apostle Paul,

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“ The good that I would do, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.” This experience, common to every life, only reveals the fact that here on this earthly plane we are souls in-the-making; our characters are not yet fully formed; we are in the process of character-building. No one has yet realized all the wondrous possibilities of human character, save Him we call Perfect. We are all making more or less rapid progress toward the shining heights beyond.

Doubtless all my readers regard themselves as moral characters, and as such they are regarded by their friends. In a general sense this is true — we are moral men and women. And yet in the strict and absolute sense, is it true of any one of us? Besides the actual moral convictions we possess, there are a thousand ties that bind us to right conduct, — the reputation we

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bear among men and upon which we pride ourselves, the ties of home and family, our personal pride, the ideals and sentiments of the community in which we live, the fear lest we lose our self-respect, or even the baser fear lest shame and disgrace may come upon us. All these and many other considerations are tremendous influences in the life of every individual, in preventing wrong actions.

But the truly moral man, in the absolute sense, is the man who at all times and under all circumstances invariably does the right. Can you say that this definition is true of your life? It is a question that only you yourself can answer. Try to imagine yourself with all restrictions removed, what would you do then, what kind of a life would yours be under such circumstances? Were there not a reputation to sustain, were there no ties of

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home and friends to bind me, were there no fear of detection and consequent disgrace, — were all these restrictions swept away, how would I act, what would my conduct be? This is the supreme test of moral character. To put the question in another form, think of yourself in some foreign land or strange community where not a soul knows you, where nobody about whom you care can see or hear, — under these conditions what would you do and what would you be? Perhaps no one of us can answer such a hypothetical question with any degree of certainty. Our reputation is what men think us to be, our character is what God knows us to be, and unfortunately these do not often agree. We only know that we are to-day what we actually are, not always what men think we are. This is why a man's reputation in the outside world

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is sometimes very different from the opinion held of him in his own home, or by his intimate friends. Heredity, environment, and the use that we have made of all the influences proceeding from these two sources, have brought us to our present stage of moral development, but we are still in the process of character-building. We have not attained as yet. Under certain conditions and facing other circumstances we might do very differently from what we now do. There cannot be the slightest question if these are the facts about human life, that the main business of every man and woman is to go on steadily, persistently and earnestly towards the perfection of moral character, the completion of the work that is now in progress in every human life. In this inner struggle, where opposing forces are constantly contending, no one can doubt that our supreme

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duty is daily and hourly to fight the battle with all forms of moral weakness, never yielding to the tendencies which are downward and degrading, but always and only to those influences which are upward and ennobling.

As a matter of fact, is it not true that since the restraining hand of parent or teacher has been removed, we have remained in our moral lives pretty much what we were at that time? Parents and teachers play a tremendous part in shaping moral character, fashioning moral ideals, and developing right habits within us. But after youth has passed, after we leave home and schoolroom, and begin to live our own lives as men and women in the world, frankly, — have we made much real progress in moral character since then? Character, we are told, is practically fixed for most people when they reach the age of 25. How

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many of us are rigorously and systematically taking ourselves in hand every day in this matter of overcoming moral imperfections and weaknesses? We excuse and attempt to justify ourselves on various pretexts. We say, "It is my temperament," or "It was characteristic of my parents," or else, "I am what I am;" and so we go on spending our time in the search for wealth or happiness, discharging more or less faithfully the duties of daily life, and yet, how little real, earnest and intelligent effort do we give each day to the eradication of these moral weaknesses, to the completion within ourselves of the truly moral character!

We may divide wrongdoing in man's moral life into two general classes, (1) sins and (2) faults. This may seem to some a distinction without a difference, and yet by common agreement we seem to be justified in making such a dis-

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tion. Moral weakness, then, may consist in actual sin, or serious fault; and yet whether it be a sin or fault, it *is* a moral weakness; and as such it should be recognized and banished from life for ever. Upon that we must stand agreed. We all know what is meant by sin. There are the grosser sins of the appetites and of the passions; there are the heinous sins which Society recognizes as such, against which its laws are directed, to the infringement of which various penalties are attached; there are the sins of pride, which go beyond mere human faults, in the harm wrought; there are the many sins of selfishness, such as avarice, greed, jealousy, envy, hate, cruelty, etc., which the laws of Society do not reach, but which are none the less sins. Such are the more flagrant sins, the more heinous wrongs, the more deadly weaknesses in human life, and we are

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familiar with them all. They confront us constantly in the columns of the daily papers, in the lives of those about us, oftentimes even in our own lives. They are the black sins, if you will, that bring greatest suffering and deprivation into human hearts and homes. Yet while we assume that we are not guilty of any of these sins, there may be a tendency in our lives — God only knows — leading in any one of these various directions, a tendency of which we may be conscious, which must needs be overcome before character is attained. All the criminals are not behind the bars. There are multitudes of men and women in the world, whom Society does not regard as criminals, whose sins have never been detected by the eye of the law, who imagine that they have safely covered their tracks and hidden deep away the sins which have been and are still

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being committed. But whether they are detected by Society, whether their friends ever come to see them in their true light or not, the influence on character is just as deadly, — often far more so, — for the undetected criminal, as for the one in prison cell.

It is, however, to this second class of moral weaknesses that I want to especially direct your thought, because here is where we are most apt to be blind and indifferent, — the faults of life, the infinitesimal wrongs, the petty sins, the temperamental weaknesses, the personal foibles and failings of men, the ten thousand different imperfections with which the daily life of every one abounds. They are not so flagrant that we can call them actual sins, but they are harmful; they are working mischief in ourselves and others continually; they are keeping us back from the highest attainments; and yet

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we have grown so used to their presence in our lives that we scarcely give them a serious thought.

These faults with which human lives abound are associated with every part of man's life. There are faults of the tongue, of the hand, of the reason, of the conscience, of the affections, of the sentiments, — there is no part of man's complex nature that is free from these failings. Sometimes they are due to a lack of activity, and sometimes to an excess of energy. The fault exists because there is *too much* or *too little* of what, in proper proportions, is not bad in itself.

I would it were possible for us to see the danger, the mischief and the harm of these minor moral defects, if allowed to continue unchecked in our lives, and first, because *these faults are the stepping stones to actual sins*. They go before, they prepare the way, they tend

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to dull the moral sensibilities, and blur the moral vision; so that at last we find ourselves no longer able to discriminate clearly between right and wrong, to draw the line sharply between the high or the low ideal. Carelessness in speech may not be sin at first, but let it be continued, and by degrees it almost inevitably leads to falsehood. The habit of exaggeration in conversation seems trivial, and yet, if unwatched, creates the mental confusion where one does not know whether he is telling the actual truth or not. It may be unintentional, for I am not speaking of conscious dishonesty which is always sin, but unconsciously these little faults of carelessness and exaggeration in speech lead to falsehood and misrepresentation that work actual injury to the lives of others. There is a wide margin, I grant you, between honesty and dishonesty, where it is difficult to

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draw the line and say just when one becomes actually dishonest. There is carelessness and irregularity and oftentimes a low sense of honour, yet we do not feel like calling these things dishonest in themselves. I have heard a business man, speaking of an associate, use language like this: "I do not like to say he is dishonest. I do not think that he means to be dishonest, but his sense of honour permits him to do things that I could never do;" and yet, this low sense of honour, this carelessness and irregularity which may not be intentional dishonesty, inevitably tends towards the dishonest act and becomes at last the veritable sin. These faults which seem so trivial, which we oftentimes regard of not sufficient importance to grapple with and put out of our lives, are the stepping stones to serious things, to graver faults, to more heinous wrongs, to actual sin itself. They are

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the influences which undermine character, weakening its structure at the very basis of manhood and womanhood.

Another reason why these faults work such havoc in moral life, is because of their *cumulative tendency*. If we could separate the little faults committed to-day from the same faults committed to-morrow, and so on through the week, and keep them separate, perhaps no great harm would be done; but as the fault is repeated over and over, it seems to grow in its intensity and cumulative power. To illustrate, a little sharpness in the voice now and then may not be altogether an unpleasant thing. It may furnish some of the spice of life, as we say. We tire of people of the "patient Griselda" type, so passive that they scarcely speak above a whisper, who never dare call their souls their own. There are

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occasions when we like to see the spirit flash out, the temper of a man assert itself, as in the case of standing up for one's rights. But add to that manifestation of temper a little more temper, and then a little more, and then still a little more, and by and by you have the shrew, the scold, the nagging wife or husband, who poisons the atmosphere and makes life miserable for all around. Such faults multiply themselves, they gain in intensity and power as they go on unwatched and unchecked, and by and by the thing which at the outset was trivial, becomes a serious fault, a grave flaw, a great weakness in one's moral life. These faults are also harmful and mischievous in the extreme, because they *silently propagate themselves* and work injury in directions that were never dreamed of. There is the pinhole of rust in the roof. You do not call a painter,

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it seems so slight a thing; it only lets a small drop of water through, and that very slowly; surely not much harm will be done before spring. But leaks go on working day and night, and the dampness finds its way into the attic, and by and by through the wall, into the next story, behind the bookcases; and still down to the lower story where the costly pictures and engravings hang; the servants come down-stairs sneezing, the children are coughing, the books are mildewed, the pictures damaged, and at last the little leak in the roof, if neglected, becomes a potent force to work harm and injury, not only to the house itself but to all its inmates. The power of even the smallest fault, allowed to go on unchecked in human life, works its injury through a thousand different avenues and carries its mischief in directions of which we may have never dreamed.

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But perhaps the greatest injury wrought by these faults of moral life lies in the fact that they *destroy inevitably the beauty, symmetry and nobility of character*. There is something in the very word character that implies harmonious combination, fineness and the proper sense of proportion. There is no nobler word in the English language. Character means symmetry; it means all-around nobility; it means well-balanced proportion of all faculties and virtues. When we speak of one as being "a strong character," this is essentially what we have in mind — a well-balanced, a symmetrical, a beautifully proportioned man or woman. Now the little fault overlays the beauty, mars the symmetry, or destroys the beautiful proportion of virtues in human life. There are different ways of destroying the beauty of a picture. You can cut and slash it from its

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frame, or, as in times of war, the cannon ball may come crashing through the wall and destroy it at once, where it hangs. Or some masterpiece of art may hang neglected in a convent kitchen, where the steam from the range, and the smoke from the chimney, and the dust of ages gather upon it; these incrustations of time may wrap themselves about it, and by and by the beauty of the picture has vanished as effectually as if it had been dragged from its frame and burned in the fire. This is what these faults, these moral weaknesses and failings and defects do for human character. They mar, they overlay, they become like unsightly incrustations that wrap themselves about us; and so inevitably, as time goes on, instead of being the noble man and the beautiful woman we might have been, the beauty or symmetry of our characters has well-nigh vanished.

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We all love precious stones, but no one wants to own an imperfect jewel. The dealer in precious stones says, "This would be a very valuable diamond, but you see that flaw — it is not worth a quarter of its seeming value." And no man wants a diamond with a flaw. Or he says, "Your emerald is large and beautiful, but it is feathered;" and when you hear that about the stone, how it instantly sinks in your estimation. Or your opal may give forth beautiful reflections, but it is imperfect because there is a scratch across its face, and you lose all pride in wearing it. It is just the same with character. These faults destroy the beauty and the perfection of life, that God waits to reveal in every one of us; and by indulging such faults we limit ourselves and diminish our influence for good. How many there are all about us, in whom we see splendid qualities

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and noble virtues — yes, but side by side with these excellencies are grave faults, great weaknesses, many failings. There is no tree in all nature so gorgeous as the red maple, whether in its spring blossoming or autumn colouring. But it usually grows in a swamp, and to reach it you have to pick your way carefully from bog to bog, generally soiling your clothes and wetting your feet, and you come back from the expedition wondering why in the world red maples have to grow in swamps. So there is many a life, beautiful to look upon from a distance, noble in its virtues, strong in many qualities, — but it is surrounded by a swamp of faults; and the life which might be the source of inspiration and strength has limited itself, has diminished its powers, has weakened tremendously its influence.

Oh! that we might see how these

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faults which we are content to tolerate in ourselves, which we go on indulging day after day, which we justify or condone on the flimsiest pretext, are really moral weaknesses and defects, things that mar our lives and keep us from the highest attainments, and may, if unchecked, undermine and destroy character!

What is the true method of overcoming these moral defects? Here is where the new Psychology comes in to throw tremendous light on this problem of the *How*. As religious teachers we have been altogether too prone to spend our time in dealing with abstract questions of theology, or else we have been content to hold up the ideal of the perfect life, — all of which is right and necessary; but where we have failed has been in our answers to the question, “How can I attain the perfection of life and char-

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acter revealed in Jesus Christ? ” Perhaps we have not known just how ourselves, and we ought to be profoundly grateful to God that through the investigations of the newer psychologists we have received so large a measure of light on this great problem of how the moral life within us is to be developed towards the highest and divinest ideals.

According to Psychology, there is a physical basis for every virtue and for every vice. Back in the brain there is the centre from which proceed all manifestations and expressions, both of good or evil. Prof. De Mott, in his famous lecture on “The Building of Character,” uses these significant words:

“The physical basis of a vicious life is a net-work of trunk lines in which the incarrying waves of stimulation waken in the soul a host of accustomed activities, such as vile memories, allur-

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ing imaginations, craving appetites and their like, having well-worn routes through the out-carrying nerves to whatever lines of conduct have been followed in their development. The physical basis of a virtuous life is a network of trunk lines where the incoming waves of stimulation on reaching the cerebral hemispheres of the brain find their well-worn tracks, with switches already set, leading to the God-given higher possessions of the soul — holy memories, pure imaginations, concentrated ambitions, righteous judgments and a will, whose nerve connections with these higher faculties is so perfect that at once the commands for right conduct are flashed forth through the out-going nerve tracks, and instantly obeyed. Here we stand face to face with a tremendous fact. Every voluntary act, whether good or evil, beats its own path a little smoother, so to

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speak, for another of like character. Every day we live, deciding against the right, we are voluntarily strengthening with our own blood the meshes of our physical organism which at last bind us body and soul, wretched slaves to passions and appetites of our own nurturing.”

Here is the statement for the physical basis of the moral life, or its opposite, from a scientific authority. Every noble and every ignoble act may be traced back to its own brain centre. The law of brain building is exactly the same in this respect, as the law of muscle building. Every time we exercise the physical muscles we are strengthening them and their power to accomplish results. Every time we excite or exercise a feeling or sentiment or train of thought, whether it is high or low, we are strengthening the brain centre, whence that feeling or sentiment or

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activity proceeds. Every time we live in the realm of pure thoughts, we are strengthening by the law of suggestion the brain centre from which pure action proceeds. Every moment we spend in the atmosphere of impure thinking we are strengthening the brain centre from which all impure action proceeds. This is the physical basis for all our thinking and for all our actions. But, and this is the vital thing to remember, by *our thinking*, we can diminish the activity of certain brain centres, and immeasurably increase the activity of others, through the potency of suggestion.

We have been taught that it is possible for a person who has pursued a certain course of life for a long period of time to be suddenly transformed, and from thenceforth live absolutely and wholly the opposite kind of life; and yet this idea belongs more to fiction than to fact, more to religious teaching

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than to religious experience. Character is a thing of slow growth, as are most things of great worth. There is no question that a man who has lived a vicious or criminal life, may, by sound conversion, be transformed so that his face is set in an entirely new direction, so that he henceforth espouses a new set of ideals and purposes, so that he "becomes a new creature;" and yet the becoming a new creature is a slow process. John B. Gough, the drunkard, was saved wonderfully by divine power, and yet Mr. Gough tells us himself that almost to the day of his death he fought a constant battle with his appetite for drink. The actions which have worn their paths in the gray matter of the brain tend to repeat themselves, until the power of their particular brain centres is weakened or diminished; and in some cases, as in Mr. Gough's, seemingly, that power is never

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entirely overcome in this life. Such is the awful power of habit. Gen. Joe Wheeler at the Battle of Santiago, as the Spaniards were fleeing, called out, "Forward, men, the Yankees are running!" In the excitement of the hour he had been carried back to the scenes of the early days of '60, when he was fighting on the Confederate side, and the old brain centre, established a generation before, became once again active. It is the same in the moral life. Sudden conversions, where they are genuine, mean that the new life has been begun, but only begun; and the transformation of character is a life-long process. That is why we find so often that men and women who have professed conversion, more or less quickly drop back into their old habits of life. It is because they are not persistent and patient enough in forming the new brain centres from whence

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must be permanently expressed the new life, that may in very truth be born in them, and yet which is soon stifled by the power of these habits of the past. We ought to have all charity for such men and women. We must "forgive seventy times seven," and more if need be, as we think of the shackles and chains which these habits of years' standing have fastened upon their lives.

The great educational reformers and our leading criminologists are coming to see and understand these principles as they never did in the past, before the newer Psychology threw its light on the way in which moral character grows and habits are formed. The principle in moral development is exactly the same as in mental development. We must recognize that it is for us to furnish the mental suggestions of those virtues or traits of character, which we

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are desirous of realizing in our lives. *Right thinking, right desires, right resolves* patiently and faithfully persisted in, must inevitably strengthen the brain centres whence all right action proceeds ; and at the same time, simply *by being let alone*, the brain centres producing wrong actions will gradually diminish in strength.

The three rules apply here as elsewhere. The first thing necessary is a clear conception of what you want to accomplish in your life. Do not be afraid to face frankly your weaknesses just as they exist. Be honest with yourself and with God, whether you are with your fellow man or not. And when you have faced fearlessly your own faults and weaknesses, get clearly in mind the image of the opposite of the things you have found to be hurtful in your life. If it is a tendency to hasty speech, hold the ideal of self-control

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and kindness in speech, and *think* that ideal intensely until it lodges itself deep in your sub-conscious self. If it is a tendency towards insincerity or exaggeration, or perhaps dishonesty in some of its many forms, then hold the opposite ideal. Say to yourself, "I realize the need of speaking the truth always and everywhere; I will be strictly accurate in my speech; I will not exaggerate, I will be absolutely honest with myself and others." Day by day keep that ideal enshrined in your mental life. If it be the tendency to any of the grosser sins of the passions or appetites, let the method be exactly the same. Say to yourself, "I *will* conquer, and the appetite or passion that may be strong within can never control me, for I am the master of my fate." Carry that thought with you day and night. Then by a series of suggestions adapted to the desired end,

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by the regular and persistent following up of these suggestions, not all at once, but gradually — you will establish the new brain centres out of which these noble activities proceed. And as your thought and attention is turned from the old habits and practices, the brain centres that started those activities gradually diminish in strength and power. This is inexorable law. This is true psychology. This is based upon scientific as well as religious experience. The hardest part comes at the beginning, when we are first trying to break old habits and form new ones, but faithfulness and patience will win the day. There is no virtue that cannot be established. There is no vice or weakness that cannot be eradicated through this method. What has been accomplished in multitudes of lives can be accomplished in ourselves, if *we will*. It all depends upon

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how dead in earnest we are in this matter of building the moral character, of living the truly moral life that at all times and under all circumstances invariably does the right.

It may be that some will ask, "Are you not leaving God out of it?" By no means. These laws of psychology are God's laws. The power that we use when we employ any of these powers of mind, is God's power. God is not a Being who dwells afar, whom I must beseech and with whom I must plead, in order to have Him grant my cry for help. The God in whom we believe and in whom Jesus trusted, is "the God in whom I live and move and have my being." All these laws of nature and of psychology are truly His laws, and the power that you and I use as we conform to these laws, is all God-given power; and so once again we discover that it is God working

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in us, as we work out, in obedience to His great laws.

Only let us remember that we are not in this earthly life, primarily to gain riches; we are not here first of all to be happy; we are not here to seek pleasure only; we are not here to attain the applause of the world; if we can get these things legitimately, let us get them by all means, but let us never forget that they are always the incidentals of our life here, never the end of life. The great end and purpose of our being here at all, is that we shall grow a soul, that we shall build a character, that we shall fashion, under God, the manhood and womanhood that shall outlast all influences of Time.