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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LETTERS FROM A FATHER TO HIS SON
ENTERING COLLEGE ***

LETTERS FROM A FATHER TO HIS SON ENTERING COLLEGE

BY

CHARLES FRANKLIN THWING

President of Western Reserve University

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PREFATORY NOTE.

Parts of the letters that make up this little book were read to my own college boys at the opening of a college year. They represent somewhat, but of course only a bit, of what I believe many a father would like to say to his own son,—as I to mine,—when he is entering the most important year of his college life—the Freshman. Those who first heard them,—even though obliged to hear,—seemed to suffer them gladly. They are, therefore, brought together, and sent out to fathers and to sons, and with a peculiar feeling of sympathy for both the parent and the boy at one of the crises of the life of each.

C. F. T.

Western Reserve University,
Cleveland.

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LETTERS FROM A FATHER TO HIS SON ENTERING COLLEGE

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My Dear Boy:—I am glad you want to go to college. Possibly I might send you even if you did not want to go, yet I doubt it. One may send a boy through college and the boy is sent through. None of the college is sent through him. But if you go, I am sure a good deal of the college will somehow get lodged in you.

You will find a thousand and one things in college which are worth while. I wish you could have each of them, but you can not. You have to use the elective system, even in the Freshman year. The trouble is not that so few boys do not seem to know how to distinguish the good from the bad, but that so many boys do not know the better from the good and the best from the better. I have known thousands of college boys, and they do not seem to distinguish, or, if they do, they do not seem to be able to apply the gospel of difference.

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You won't think me imposing on you—will you?—if before entering college I tell you of some things which seem to me to be most worthy of your having and being on the day you get your A. B.

The first thing I wish to say to you is that I want you to come out of the college a thinker. But how to make yourself a thinker is both hard to do and hard to tell. Yet, the one great way of making yourself a thinker is to think. Thinking is a practical art. It cannot be taught. It is learned by doing. Yet there are some subjects in the course which seem to me to be better fitted than others to teach you this art. I've been trying to find out what are some of the marks or characteristics of these subjects. They are, I believe, subjects which require concentration of thought; subjects which have clearness in their elements, yet which are comprehensive, which are complex, which are consecutive in their arrangements of parts, each part being closely, rigorously related to every other, which represent continuity, of which the different elements or parts may be prolonged unto far reaching consequences. Concentration in the thinker, clearness, comprehensiveness, complexedness, consecutiveness, continuity—there are the six big C's, which are marks of the subjects which tend to create the thinker.

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To attempt to apply each of these marks to many different subjects of the curriculum represents a long and unduly stupefying labor. Apply them for yourself. Different subjects have different worths for the students, but there are certain recognized values attached to each coin of the intellectual realm.

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Mathematics and pure physics eminently represent the larger part of these six elements which I have named. Mathematics demands concentration. Mathematics is, in a sense, the mind giving itself to certain abstract truths. What is X^2 but a form of the mind? Mathematics demands clearness of thinking and of statement. Without clearness mathematics is naught. It also represents comprehensiveness. The large field of its truth is pressed into its greater relationships. Mathematical truth is complex. Part is involved with part. It is consecutive. Part follows part in necessary order. It is also continuous. It represents a graded progress.

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It is, however, to be remembered that the reasoning of mathematics is unlike most reasoning which we usually employ. Mathematical reasoning is necessary. Most reasoning is not necessary. That two *plus* two equal four is a truth about which people do not differ usually. But reasoning in economics, such as the protective tariff; reasoning in philosophy, such as the presence or absence of innate ideas; reasoning in history; is not absolute. I have even wondered how far Cambridge, standing for mathematics and the physical sciences, has helped to make men great. Oxford is said to be the mother of great movements, and it is. Here the Wesleyan movement, and the Tractarian movement and the Social movement, as seen in Toynbee Hall, had their origins. Cambridge is called the mother of great men. Is there any relation of cause and effect, at Cambridge, between its emphasis upon mathematics and the sciences and the great men whom she has helped to make?

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Logic is the subject of a course which embodies the six marks I have laid down. It demands these great elements in almost the same ways in which mathematics demands them. Logic, in a sense, might be called applied or incarnate mathematics. The man who wishes to be a thinker should be

and is the master of logic.

Language, too, represents almost one half of the course of the modern college, and it represented more than one half of the course of the older college. What merits has the study of language for making the thinker? The study of languages makes no special demand on the quality of concentration, but the study does demand and creates comprehensiveness and clearness. The study represents a complex process and requires analysis. The time-spirit has worked and still works in languages unto diverse and manifold forms. Languages are developed with a singular union of orderliness and disorderliness. The parts of a language are in some cases closely related. The Greek verb is the most highly developed linguistic product. It is built up with the delicacy and poise of a child's house of blocks, yet with the orderliness of a Greek temple. Each letter represents a different meaning. Augment, prefix, ending has its own significance. I asked a former Chinese minister to this country what taught him to think. His succinct answer was "Greek."

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In creating the thinker, the historical and social sciences have chief value in their complex relationships. Select any period of history pregnant with great results. For instance, select the efflorescence of the Greek people after the Persian wars. What were the causes of this vast advance? Take, for instance, the political and social condition prevalent for thirty years in America before the Civil War. What were the causes of this war? Or, take economic affairs—what are the reasons for and against a protective tariff? What are the limitations of such a tariff? Such conditions require comprehensive knowledge of complex matters. From such mastery the thinker results,—the thinker of consideration and considerateness. He can perceive a series of facts and the relation of each to each.

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The law of values of these different subjects in making the thinker, is that the subjects which demand hard thinking are most creative. Easy subjects, or hard subjects easily worked out, have little place in the making of a thinker. One must think hard to become a hard thinker. Subjects and methods which are hard create the inevitable result.

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Subjects which demand thinking only, however, sometimes are rather barren in result. One likes a certain content or concreteness in the thinking process. Abstract thinking sometimes seems like a balloon which has no connection with the earth. If a balloon is to be guided, it must be held down to *terra firma*. The ricksha men in Japan can run better if the carriage has a load. The bullet must have weight to go. A subject, therefore, which has content may quicken thinking and stimulate thoughtfulness.

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The thinker is not made, however, only by the subjects he studies. In this condition the teacher has his place, and especially the methods of teaching and the inspiring qualities of teaching which he represents, have value. The dead lift of the discipline of the mind is liable to be a deadening process. Every subject needs a man to vitalize it for the ordinary student. Every graduate recalls teachers of such strength. He holds them in unfading gratitude and often in deathless affection.

II

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The second thing I want to say to you is that I want you to be a gentleman. How absurd it is for me to write that to you. Of course, you are, and, of course, you will be one. In the creation of the gentleman as well as of the thinker, the personal equation counts. In fact, it counts for more in the making of the gentleman. For in this making truth is less important than the personality. In the gentleman intellectual altruism and moral appreciativeness are large elements. One has to see and to understand the personal condition with which he deals. If he is dull, his conduct is as apt to give unhappiness as pleasure.

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In order to open the eyes of the heart, in order to create an intellectual conscientiousness, the study of great literatures must be assigned a high place. Constant and complex needs to be such study. Literature represents humanity. The humanities are humanity. Literature is style and style is the man. The gentleman as a product represents the homeopathic principle. The gentleman makes the gentleman. Certain colleges are distinguished by the type of gentleman which they create. It will usually be found, on observation or analysis, that colleges which are distinguished for the gracious conduct of their teachers toward their students are distinguished by the gracious bearing of their graduates.

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As a gentleman you will be a friend and will have friends. In this relation of friendship in its earlier stages there is no part of life in which it is more important for you to exercise the virtue and grace of reserve. Be in no haste to make friends. Friendships are growths, not manufactures. These growths, too, are like the elm and the oak, not like the willow. At this point lies all I want to say to you about joining a fraternity. If the men you want to be your intimate friends are members and ask you to join, accept. If the men you do not wish to be your intimate friends wish you to go with them, decline. Do not join for the sake of a blind pool membership. Such a membership is really a sort of social insincerity, a lie.

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III

In the assessment of academic values, give a high place to sound health. The worth is so great that very slight may be the paragraph I write you. In the "Egoist," George Meredith says, "Health, wealth and beauty are three considerations to be sought for in a woman, who is to become the wife of Sir Willoughby." Wealth and beauty are quite as much out of ordinary results of the education of the American college as health should be among those results.

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One may be sick, and through sickness become a saint; one may be sick and through sickness become a sinner. But one cannot be sick and at the same time be as good a worker as he would be if he were not sick. Good workers the world needs, and, therefore, men of first-rate health the world needs. If one is to be a great worker, one must have great health. It is not for me to write as would a physician, but I may be allowed to say that in caring for health, one should not become self-conscious. Let me further suggest:—

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First—That you sleep eight hours.

Second—Exercise at least a half an hour each day in the gymnasium.

Third—Eat much of simple food; but not too much!

Fourth—Don't worry.

Fifth—Play ball much (base, foot, basket); but not too much!

In a word, be a good animal.

One of my old teachers once said to me after I was engaged in my work:—

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"I am sorry to see you looking so well."

"Why?"

"Because every man has to break down three times in life. I broke down three times; Professor Hitchcock broke down three times; every man must break down three times, and the earlier the breaks come, the better."

There is no need of any man's breaking down, if he will observe with fair respect the laws of sleep, exercise and food.

IV

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I also desire that you should be a man of scholarly sympathy and appreciation. I can hardly hope you will be a scholar. Yet you may. The scholar seldom emerges. If one out of each thousand students, entering the American college this year, should prove to be a scholar, the proportion is as large as one can hope for. For up to one in a thousand is as big a proportion as the world is prepared to accept. Yet it is to be hoped that you and that most men should have appreciation and sympathy with scholarship. You should know what scholarship means: in work as toilsomeness, in method as wisdom, in atmosphere as thoroughness and patience, in result as an addition to the stock of human knowledge. If you be a laborer in one field, you should not seek, and I know you will not seek, to discount the existence of other fields, or despise the laborers in those fields. If you become an engineer, you will not condemn the classicist as useless. If you are a Grecian, you will not despise the mechanical engineer as crass and coarse.

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One finds that the best men of any one field or calling are more inclined to recognize the eminence of the claims of other fields or callings. Smallness spells provincialism, and provincialism spells smallness. I have heard one of the greatest teachers of chemistry say that if he were to make a boy a professor of chemistry, he would, among other things, first teach him Greek.

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V

The first principle of college life is the principle of doing one's duty. In your appreciation of scholarship, your first duty is to learn your lessons. I have known many college men who learned their lessons, who yet failed to get from the college all that they ought to get. But I have never known a man who failed to get his lessons, whatever else he may have got, to receive the full advantage of the course. The curriculum of every good college is the resultant of scores or of hundreds of years of reflection and of trial. It represents methods, content, purposes, which many teachers through many experiments of success and of failure have learned are the best forces for training mind and for forming character.

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But for the student to receive worthy advantage from these forces he is obliged to relate himself to them by hard intellectual attention and application. Sir Leslie Stephen says that the

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Cambridge teachers of his time were not given to enthusiasms, but preached common-sense, and common-sense said: "Stick to your triposes, grind at your mill, and don't set the universe in order till you have taken your bachelor's degree." The duty of the American college student is no less evident. He is to stick to his triposes. His triposes are his lessons. Among the greatest of all teachers was Louis Agassiz. A story has become classical as told by the distinguished naturalist, the late Dr. Samuel H. Scudder, regarding the methods of the great teacher with his students.

In brief the story is that Mr. Scudder on going to Agassiz was told, "'Take this fish and look at it. We call it a Hæmulon. By and by I will ask you what you have seen.' ... In ten minutes I had seen all that could be seen in that fish.... Half an hour passed, an hour, another hour; the fish began to look loathsome. I turned it over and around; looked it in the face—ghastly!—from behind, beneath, above, sideways, at three-quarters view—just as ghastly. I was in despair. At an early hour I concluded that lunch was necessary; so, with infinite relief, the fish was carefully replaced in the jar, and for an hour I was free. [Pg 34]

"On my return I learned that Professor Agassiz had been at the Museum, but had gone, and would not return for several hours.... Slowly I drew forth that hideous fish, and, with a feeling of desperation, again looked at it. I might not use a magnifying glass; instruments of all kinds were interdicted. My two hands, my two eyes, and the fish; it seemed a most limited field.... At last a happy thought struck me—I would draw the fish; and now with surprise I began to discover new features in the creature.... [Pg 35]

"He listened attentively to my brief rehearsal of the structure of parts whose names were still unknown to me.... When I had finished he waited, as if expecting more, and then, with an air of disappointment, 'You have not looked very carefully; why,' he continued most earnestly, 'you haven't even seen one of the most conspicuous features of the animal, which is as plainly before your eyes as the animal itself. Look again! Look again!' and he left me to my misery. [Pg 36]

"I ventured to ask what I should do next.

"'Oh, look at your fish,' he said, and left me again to my own devices. In a little more than an hour he returned and heard my new catalogue. [Pg 37]

"'That is good, that is good,' he repeated: 'but that is not all; go on.' And so for three long days he placed that fish before my eyes, forbidding me to look at anything else or use any artificial aid. 'Look, look, look,' was his repeated injunction."

Doctor Scudder says that this was the best entomological lesson he ever had, and a lesson of which the influence extended to the details of every subsequent study.

It is the duty of the college student to look at his fish, to thumb his lexicon, to read his textbook, to study his notes, to think, and think hard, upon the truth therein presented. Of all the students in the world the Scotch represent this simple duty the best. The men at Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrews and Aberdeen toil mightily. [Pg 38]

The duty of learning one's lessons is, in these times, opposed by at least two elements of college life. One is self-indulgence and the other is athletics. Self-indulgence is a general cause and constant. Athletics have in the last thirty years come to be a force more or less dominant. Athletics represent a mighty force for collegiate and human betterment. Football, which is *par excellence* the college game, is an admirable method of training the man physical, the man intellectual and the man ethical. But football is not a college purpose; it is a college means. It is a means for the promotion of scholarship, for the formation of manhood. When football or other forms of college sport are turned from being a method and a means into being ends in themselves the misfortune is lamentable. [Pg 39]

At a recent Harvard commencement, Professor Shaler, than whom no man in Harvard was more vitally in touch with all undergraduate interests, spoke of the harm wrought upon many students through their absorption in athletics. It cannot be denied for an instant that many men are hurt by giving undue attention to sports. Of course many men are benefited, and, are benefited vastly, by athletics, but men who are harmed should at once be obliged to learn the lesson of learning their lessons. That is the chief lesson which they ought to learn. [Pg 40]

VI

In the appreciation of scholarship is found the strain of intellectual humility. The scholar is more inclined to inquire than to affirm. He is more ready to ask "What do you think?" than to say "I know." He is remote from intellectual arrogance. Humility means greatness. Cockiness is a token of narrowness. The Socratic spirit of modesty is as true a manner of wisdom as it is an effective method of increasing wisdom. The man who has an opinion on all things, has no right to an opinion on any one. [Pg 41]

This intellectual sympathy and appreciation should take on esthetic relations. You should be a lover of beauty as well as of wisdom. Good books, good pictures, good music, good architecture, should be among your avocations. Read a piece of good literature every day. See a good picture or a good copy of one every day. Hear some good music every day. The chapel service may give it to you. And see a piece of good architecture every day. Some of the college buildings can give it. [Pg 42]

Alas! many do not. Such visions and hearings will soak into your manhood.

All this is only saying lead the life intellectual. You should not only be a thinker, you should be thoughtful. You should be a man of large thoughtfulness. You should be prepared to interpret life and all phenomena in terms of the intellect. Many of our countrymen are intelligent. They know a great deal. They have gathered up information about many things. This information is desultory, unrelated. Their minds are a Brummagem drawer. Here, by the way, lies the worthlessness of President Eliot's list of books to the untrained mind. To the educated mind such books mean much; to the uneducated, little. Yet, as a college man, you may know less than not a few uneducated people may know. I don't care. The life intellectual is more and most important.

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VII

I also want you to go from the college a good combination of a good worker and a good loafer. To be able to loaf well is not a bad purpose of an education. The loafing that carries along with itself the freedom from selfishness, appreciation of others' conditions, and gentlemanliness, is worth commending. Loafing that follows hard work and prepares for hard work is one of the best equipments of a man. Loafing that has no object, loafing as a vocation, is to be despised. The late Professor Jebb wrote to his father once from Cambridge, saying:—

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"I *will* read but not very hard; because I know better than you or any one can tell me, how much reading is good for the development of my own powers at the present time, and will conduce to my success next year and afterwards; and I will *not* identify myself with what are called in Cambridge 'the reading set,' *i. e.*, men who read twelve hours a day and never do anything else; (1) because I should lose ten per cent. of reputation (which at the university is no bubble but real living useful capital); (2) because the reading set, with a few exceptions, are utterly uncongenial to me. My set is a set that *reads*, but does not only read; that accomplishes one great end of university life by mixing in cheerful and intellectual society, and learning the ways of the world which its members are so soon to enter; and which, without the pedantry and cant of the 'reading man,' turns out as good Christians, better scholars, better men of the world, and better gentlemen, than those mere plodders with whom a man is inevitably associated if he identifies himself with the reading set."

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I rather like the loafing which young Jebb indulged in, but I fear it is a type of the life which some college men do not follow. They are inclined to look upon the four college years as a respite between the labor of the preparatory school and the labor of business, or rather they may look upon the four college years as a life of professional leisure. I am glad you cannot, even if you wished to, and I know you do not wish to, think of college as either respite or leisure. Whether the college is wise in allowing such loafing, it is not for me now to say, but I can trust you to be the proper kind of loafer as well as of worker.

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Indeed, I want you to have good habits of working. In such habits the valuation of time is of special significance. For time is not an agent. It does nothing. As a power, time is absolutely worthless. As a condition, time is of infinite worth. Mark Pattison, the rector of Lincoln College, said: "Time seems infinite to the freshman in his first term." But let me add that to a senior in his last term time is a swiftly moving opportunity. The need of time becomes more and more urgent as the college years go. When Jowett was fifty-nine years old, he wrote: "I cannot say *vixi*, for I feel as if I were only just beginning and had not half completed what I had intended. If I live twenty-five years more I will, *Dei gratia*, accomplish a great work for Oxford and for philosophy in England. Activity, temperance, no enmities, self-denial, saving eyes, never overwork." On his seventieth birthday Jowett made out what he called his Scheme of Life. It was this:—

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EIGHT YEARS OF WORK.

1 Year—Politics, Republic, Dialogues of Plato.

2 Years—Moral Philosophy.

2 Years—Life of Christ.

1 Year—Sermons.

2 Years—Greek Philosophy; Thales to Socrates.

I turn over the last pages of Jowett's "Life and Letters," and I find a list of his works. Is there a moral philosophy in the list? No. A life of Christ? No. A treatise on Greek philosophy? No. But I do find a volume of college sermons, published since his death, and also a new edition of his "Plato." One of the most pathetic things in the volumes that cover his life is the constant reference to *agenda*—things he was to do. But the *agenda* rapidly become *nugae*—impossibilities—and the reason was simply, as it ever is, the lack of time.

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To save time, take time in large pieces. Do not cut time up into bits. Adopt the principle of continuous work. The mind is like a locomotive. It requires time for getting under headway. Under headway it makes its own steam. Progress gives force as force makes progress. Do not slow down as long as you run well and without undue waste. Take advantage of momentum. Prolonged thinking leads to profound thinking. Steamers which have the longest routes seek deepest waters. Let me also counsel you to do what must be done sometime as soon as possible. Thus you avoid worry. You save yourself needless trouble and waste. You also have the

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satisfaction of having the thing done which is a very blessed satisfaction. I would have you spring to your work in the mood and the way in which J. C. Shairp, in his poem on the "Balliol Scholars," spoke of Temple:—

"With strength for labor, 'as the strength of ten'
To ceaseless toil he girt him night and day:
A native King and ruler among men,
Ploughman or Premier, born to bear true sway:
Small or great duty never known to shirk,
He bounded joyously to sternest work—
Lest buoyant others turn to sport and play."

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Therefore, do not be a slave. Go at your job with enthusiasm. To get enthusiasm in work, work. Work creates enthusiasm for work in a healthy mind. The dyer's hand is not subdued to its materials; it is strengthened through materials for service.

VIII

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You will soon learn, my son, that college men are, as a rule, sound in body, sane in mind, in heart pure, in will vigorous, keen in conscience, and filled with noble aspirations. Such men usually interpret life, both academic and general, in sanity and in justice.

Yet, despite these happy conditions, there does prevail a danger of college men making certain misconceptions of college life.

A misconception which is more or less common among students you will soon have occasion to see relates to the failure to distinguish, on the one side, knowledge from efficiency, and on the other, knowledge from cultivation. In the former time, the worth of knowledge, as knowledge, was emphasized in the college. The man who knew was regarded as the great man. To make each student an encyclopedia of information was a not uncommon aim. It is certainly well to know. Scholarship is seldom in peril of receiving too high encomium. Yet, knowledge is not power. Sometimes knowledge prevents the creation, or retention, or use, of power. The intellect may be so clogged with knowledge that the will becomes sluggish or irregular in its action.

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Knowledge, however, is always to be so gathered that it shall create power and minister to efficiency. The accumulation of information is to be made with such orderliness, accuracy, thoroughness and comprehensiveness, that these qualities shall represent the chief and lasting result of knowledge. Facts may be forgotten, but the orderliness, accuracy, thoroughness and comprehensiveness in which these facts have been gathered are more important than the facts themselves, and these qualities should, and may, become a permanent intellectual treasure. These qualities are elements of efficiency. They are forces for making attainments, for securing results. The student, however, while he is securing the facts which lead to these qualities is in peril of forgetting the primary value of the qualities themselves.

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On the other side, the student is also in peril of failing to distinguish between knowledge as knowledge, and knowledge which leads to personal cultivation. What is cultivation, and who is the cultivated person? Some would say that the cultivated person is the person of beautiful manners, of the best knowledge of life's best things, who is at home in any society or association. Such a definition is not to be spurned. For, is it not said that "Manners make the man"? Manners make the man! That is, Do manners create the man? that is, Do manners give reputation to the man? that is, Do manners express the character of the man? Which of the three interpretations is sound? Or does each interpretation intimate a side of the polygon?

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I know of a man put in nomination for a place in an historic college. The trustees were in doubt respecting his bearing in certain social relations. As a test, I may say, he was asked to be a guest at an afternoon tea. Rather silly way, in some respects, wasn't it? I doubt if he to this day is aware of the trial to which he was subjected. The way one accepts or declines a note of invitation, the way one uses his voice, the way one enters or retires from a room may, or may not, be little in itself, but the simple act is evidence of conditions. For is not manner the comparative of man? I would not say it is the superlative.

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Others would affirm that the cultivated person is the person who appreciates the best which life offers. Appreciation is intellectual, emotional, volitional. It is discrimination *plus* sympathy. It contains a dash of admiration. It recognizes and adopts the best in every achievement, in the arts of literature, poetry, sculpture, painting, architecture. The cultivated person seeks out the least unworthy in the unworthy, and the most worthy in that which is at all worthy. The person of cultivation knows, compares, relates, judges. He has standards and he applies them to things, measures methods. He is able to discriminate and to feel the difference between the Parthenon and the Madeleine, between a poem of Tennyson and one of Longfellow. His moral nature is fine, as his intellectual is honest. He is filled with reverence for truth, duty, righteousness. He is humble, for he knows how great is truth, how imperative, duty. He is modest, for he respects others. He is patient with others and with himself, for he knows how unattainable is the right. He can be silent when in doubt. He can speak alone when truth is unpopular. He is willing to lose his voice in the "choir invisible" when it chants either the Miserere or the Gloria in Excelsis. He is a

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man of proportion, of reality, sincerity, honesty, justice, temperance—intellectual and ethical.

The college man is in peril of forgetting the worth of cultivation. Knowledge should lead to cultivation, but, as in the case of securing efficiency, the mind of the student may be so fixed upon processes as to fail to recognize the importance of the result as manifest in the cultivation of his whole being.

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In the case of both efficiency and cultivation, the student is to remember there is no substitute. Intellectual power cannot be counterfeited. Any attempt, also, to secure a sham cultivation is foreordained to failure.

IX

The student is also too prone to distinguish between academic morals and human morals. As a student, he may crib in examination without compunction. As a student, he too often feels it is right to deceive his teacher. Students who are gentlemen and who would as soon cut their own throats as steal your purse, will yet steal your office sign or the pole of your barber. In such college outlawry he loses no sense of self-respect, and in no degree the respect of his fellow students. Let us confess at once that in what may be called academic immorals there is usually no sense of malice. This condition does create a distinct difference between academic and human ethics. Let the distinction be given full credit. Yet, be it at once and firmly said, a lie is a lie, and thieving is thieving. The blameworthiness may differ in different cases, but there is always blameworthiness.

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Be it also said the public does not usually recognize the distinction which the student himself seeks to make. The public becomes justly impatient with, and more or less indignant over, the horseplay, or immoralities which students work outside, and sometimes inside, college walls. The student is to remember that before he was a student he was a man, that after he has ceased to be a student he is to be a man, and while he is a student he is also to be a man, and also before, after, and always he is to be a gentleman. Such irregular conditions belong, of course, to youth as well as to the student. The irreverence which characterizes all American life is prone to become insolence, when, in the student, it is raised to the second or third power. The able man and true—student or not a student—of course presently adjusts himself to orderly conditions. The academic experience proves to be a discipline, though sometimes not a happy one, and the discipline helps towards the achievement of a large and rich character.

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Another misconception made by the student is also common. It is a misconception attaching to any weakness of his character. The student is inclined to believe that there may be weaknesses which are not structural. He may think that there may be some weakness in one part of his whole being which shall not affect his whole being. He may believe that he can skimp his intellectual labor without making his moral nature thin, or that he can break the laws of his moral nature without breaking his intellectual integrity. He may think that he can play fast and loose with his will without weakening his conscience or without impairing the truthfulness of his intellectual processes. He may imagine that he is composed of several distinct potencies and that he can lessen the force of any one of them without depreciating the value of the others. Lamentable mistake, and one often irretrievable. For man is a unit. Weakness in one part becomes weakness in every part. In the case of the body, the illness of one organ damages all organs. If the intellect be dull, or narrow in its vision, or false in its logic, the heart refuses to be quickened and the conscience is disturbed. If the heart be frigid, the intellect, in turn, declines to do its task with alertness or vigor. If conscience be outraged, the intellect loses force and the heart becomes clothed with shame. Man is one. Strength in one part is strength in, and for, every part, and weakness in one part results in weakness in, and for, every part.

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For avoiding these three misconceptions, the simple will of the college man is of primary worth. If he will to distinguish knowledge from efficiency, and knowledge from cultivation, if he will to know that the distinction between academic morals and human morals is not so deep as some believe, and if he will to believe in the unity of character, the student has the primary help for securing a sound idea and a right practice.

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XI

I write to you, my boy, out of the experience and observation of thirty years in which I have followed as best I could the careers of graduates of many of our colleges. The other afternoon I set down the names of some of these graduates of the two colleges which I know best. Among them were men who, fifteen or thirty years after their graduation, are doing first-rate work. They

are lawyers, editors, physicians, judges, clergymen, teachers, merchants, manufacturers, architects and writers. As I have looked at the list with a mind somewhat inquisitive I have asked myself what are the qualities or conditions which have contributed to the winning of the great results which these men have won.

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The answers which I have given myself are manifold. For it is always difficult in personal matters to differentiate and to determine causes. In mechanical concerns it is not difficult. But in the calculation of causes which constitute the value of a person as a working force one often finds oneself baffled. The result frequently seems either more or less than an equivalent of the co-operating forces. The personal factor, the personal equation counts immensely. These values we cannot measure in scales or figure out by the four processes of arithmetic.

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Be it said that the causes of the success of these men do not lie in their conditions. No happy combination of circumstances, no windfall of chance, gave them what they have achieved. If those who graduated in the eighth decade had graduated in the ninth, or if those who graduated in the ninth had graduated in the earlier time, it probably would have made no difference. Neither does the name, with possibly a single exception, nor wealth prove to be a special aid. Nor have friends boosted or pushed them. Friends may have opened doors for them; but friends have not urged them either to see or to embrace opportunities.

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These men seem to me to have for their primary and comprehensive characteristic a large sanity. They have the broad vision and the long look. They possess usually a kind of sobriety which may almost be called Washingtonian. The insane man reasons correctly from false premises. The fool has no premises from which to reason. These men are neither insane nor foolish. They have suppositions, presuppositions, which are true. They also follow logical principles which are sound. They are in every way well-ordered. They keep their brains where their brains ought to be—inside their skulls. They keep their hearts where their hearts ought to be—inside their chests. They keep their appetites where their appetites ought to be. Too many men keep their brains inside their chests: the emotions absorb the intellect. Too many men put their hearts inside their skull: the emotions are dried up in the clear air of thought. Too many put both brains and heart where the appetites are: both judgment and action are swallowed up in the animal.

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But these men are whole, wholesome, healthy, healthful. They seem to represent those qualities which, James Bryce says, Archbishop Tait embodied: "He had not merely moderation, but what, though often confounded with moderation, is something rarer and better, a steady balance of mind. He was carried about by no winds of doctrine. He seldom yielded to impulses, and was never so seduced by any one theory as to lose sight of other views and conditions which had to be regarded. He knew how to be dignified without assumption, firm without vehemence, prudent without timidity, judicious without coldness." They are remote from crankiness, eccentricity. They may or may not have fads; but they are not faddists. Not one of them is a genius in either the good or the evil side of conspicuous native power. They see and weigh evidence. They are a happy union of wit and wisdom, of jest and precept, of work and play, of companionship and solitude, of thinking and resting, of receptivity and creativeness, of the ideal and the practical, of individualism and of sympathy. They are living in the day, but they are not living for the day. They embody the doctrine of the golden mean.

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Each of these men has also in his career usually more than filled the place he occupied. He has overflowed into the next higher place. The overflow has raised him into the higher lock. The career has been an ascending spiral. Each higher curve has sprung out of the preceding and lower. From the attorneyship of the county to service as attorney of the State, and to a place on the Supreme Bench of the United States:—From a pastorate in a small Maine city to a pastorate suburban, and from the pastorate suburban to a pastorate on Fifth Avenue:—From a professorship in an humble place to a professorship in largest relations:—From the building of cottages to the building of great libraries and museums. This is the order of progression. I will not say that any of these men did the best he could do at every step of the way. Some did; some did not, probably. But what is to the point, each did better than the place demanded. He more than earned his wages, his salary, his pay. He had a surplus; he was a creditor. His employers owed him more than they paid him. They found the best way of paying him and keeping him was to advance him.

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Such is the natural evolution of skill and power. The only legitimate method of advancement is to make advancement necessary, inevitable, by the simple law of achievement. The simple law of achievement depends upon the law of increasing force, which is the law that personal force grows through the use of personal force.

Hiram Stevens Maxim in the sketch of his life tells of his working in Flynt's carriage factory at Abbot, Maine, when a boy of about fifteen. From Flynt's at Abbot he went to Dexter, a large town, where he became a foreman. He presently went to a threshing machine factory in northern New York; thence to Fitchburg, Mass., where he obtained a place in the engineering works of his uncle. In this factory he says he could do more work than any other man save one. Thence he went to a place in Boston; from Boston to New York, where he received high pay as a draughtsman. While he was working in New York he conceived the idea of making a gun which would load and fire itself by the energy derived from the burning powder. From work in a little place in Maine, Maxim, by doing each work the best possible, has made himself a larger power.

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Furthermore, these men represent goodfellowship. They embody friendliness. The late Robert Lowe (Viscount Sherbrooke) was at one time esteemed to be the equal of John Bright and of Gladstone in oratory, and their superior in intellect. He died in 1892 unknown and unlamented.

He failed by reason of a lack of friendliness. Lowe was once an examiner at Oxford. Into an oral examination which he was conducting a friend came and asked how he was getting on. "Excellently," replied Lowe, "five men flunked already and the sixth is shaky." Ability without goodfellowship is usually ineffective; good ability *plus* good fellowship makes for great results. [Pg 80]

In this atmosphere of friendliness, these men are practising the Golden Rule. They are not advertising the fact. They do much in this atmosphere of friendliness for large bodies of people. They follow the sentiment which Pasteur expressed near the close of his great career: "Say to yourselves first: 'What have I done for my instruction?' and, as you gradually advance, 'What have I done for my country?' until the time comes when you may have the immense happiness of thinking that you have contributed in some way to the progress and to the good of humanity. But whether our efforts are or are not favored by life, let us be able to say when we come near the great goal: 'I have done what I could.'" They have done much for the individual, for the local neighborhood. They have given themselves in numberless services, boards, committees, commissions—works which count much in time and strength. These services constitute no small share of the worth of a commonwealth, of a community. [Pg 81]

To one relation of these men I wish especially to refer. This is their relation to wealth. Some of these men are business men. Wealth is one of the normal results of business. Some of these men are professional men. Wealth is not the normal result of professional service. But the seeking of wealth has not in the life and endeavor of these men played a conspicuous part. If wealth is the primary purpose, they keep the purpose to themselves. They do not talk much about it. But most of them do not hold wealth as a primary purpose. Rather their primary and atmospheric aim is to serve the community through their business. The same purpose moves them which also moves the lawyer, the minister, the doctor. Life, not living, is their principle. [Pg 82]

To one further element I must refer. It comprehends, perhaps, much that I have been trying to say to you, my son. These men kept, and are keeping themselves to their work. They do not waste themselves. They are economical of time and strength. The late Provost Pepper of the University of Pennsylvania said (in a manuscript not formally published): "Many can do with less than eight or even seven hours of sleep while working hard, provided they recognize the increased risk; that while running their engine they take more scrupulous care with every part of the machinery. Machine must be perfect, fuel ditto; everything must be sacrificed to the one point of keeping the machinery running thus: Subjection of carnal, emotional excesses; certainty that no weak spots exist; diet, especially too much eating, too fast eating; stimulants, tobacco, open-air exercise; cool-headed, almost callous, critical analysis of oneself, one's sensations and effect of work on the system; clear knowledge of danger lines; result, avoidance of transgressing, and immediate summons at right time." [Pg 84]

These men are men of self-restraint. They are like rivers having dams, keeping their waters back in order that the water may be used more effectively. They are free from entangling alliances. They are not men of one thing; they are often men of two, three, a dozen things. But one thing is primary, the others secondary. They may have avocations; but they have only one vocation. "This one thing I do." I have already quoted from Pasteur. Of him it is said by his biographer: "In the evening, after dinner, he usually perambulated the hall and corridor of his rooms at the École Normale, cogitating over various details of his work. At ten o'clock he went to bed, and at eight the next morning, whether he had had a good night or a bad one, he resumed his work in the laboratory." His wife wrote to their children: "Your father is absorbed in his thoughts, talks little, sleeps little, rises at dawn, and in one word, continues the life I began with him this day thirty-five years ago." Learn from the Frenchman, my boy! [Pg 85]

Keeping themselves at their one work these men embody a sense of duty. I find they have a conscience. Their conscience is not worn outside, but inside, their bosom. They make no show of doing what they ought. They simply do what they are called upon to do—and that is all there is to it. It was said of a first scholar in an historic college that he was never caught working. These same men may, or may not be caught working, but they do work, and their work is a normal and moral part of their being. [Pg 86]

But your face, my son, is rather toward your own future than toward the past of other men. But your own future is as nothing save as it touches other men. Therefore, do have an enthusiasm for man as man. Enthusiasm for humanity has its basis in love for man as man, in a belief in the indefinite progress of man and in a determination to promote that progress. In a posthumous romance of Hawthorne the heroine points out to her lover the service which they will give to mankind in successive endless generations. In one age, poverty shall be wiped out; in another, passion and hatred and jealousy shall cease; in a third, beauty shall take the place of ugliness, happiness of pain, and generosity of niggardliness. In reality, not in romance, every student is to feel a passion for human service. These toiling and tired brothers and sisters are to be loved, not with a mere emotional affection, but with a mighty will. One is to adopt the principle of Gladstone and not of the Marquis of Salisbury in relation to humanity. [Pg 87]

The student also is to believe that the human brotherhood is capable of indefinite progress. The law of evolution makes the belief in human perfectibility easy; the principles of religion make the belief glorious. Slow is the progress. One generation turns the jack-screw of uplifting one thread; but it is a thread. Humanity does rise. Linked with this love for man and the assurance of his progress the college man is to determine himself to advance this progress. Whatever his condition, whatever his ability, he is to do his part. As is said in that noble epitaph to Wordsworth, placed in the little church at Grasmere, each is to be "a minister of high and sacred [Pg 88]

truth."

I want you to come out from the college with a determination to do something worth while. It is rather singular how political ambitions have ceased among graduates. Some say all ambition has ceased among college men. I do not believe it. The softer times may not nurse the sturdier virtues; but men are still men. The words which Stevenson wanted put on his tombstone: "He clung to his paddle," and the words of George Eliot: "Don't take opium," and the words of Carlyle: "Burn your own smoke," are still characteristic of college men. Men are still moved by the great things, and by such inspiration they are inspired great things to do.

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XII

I am not, I think, going too far if I refer to one very personal matter, my son. I mean your relation to the Supreme Being. That Being may be conceived under many forms, as Love, as Omnipotent Force, as Omniscient Knowledge, as Perfect Beauty, as Absolute Right. The college man interprets the Supreme Being under at least one of these forms; and he may be able to interpret him under all of these forms. To this Being he should relate himself. Let the college man learn, and learn all; but he should not neglect to learn of the Divine Being. The college man should love, and love every object as it is worthy of loving; but he should not decline to love the Supreme Being. For He is Supreme.

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The college man is to follow the wisest leadership, to obey the highest principles, to give himself to the contemplation of the sublimest; but his following, his obedience, his self-surrender are to bring him to and keep him with the Being Supreme. Religion thus broadly interpreted makes a keen and mighty appeal to the college man. Let the college man be religious; let not the college man have a religion. Let religion be a fundamental element of his character, and not a quality of his changing self. His religion, like that of every other man, should first be human, not scholastic; first essential and natural, not arbitrary.

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Be religious. It sounds almost goodish, but I know you do not think it such. Be religious. Relate yourself to something. Relate yourself to some What. Or relate yourself to some Who: beyond whatever your eye sees or your hand touches. I do not care how you put it. If I were a Buddhist, I would say, worship Buddha. Be what the great image at Kamakura represents. If I were a Mohammedan, I would say, follow the teachings of the Koran, and pray. I am, and you are, a Christian. Therefore I say: Love your God. Follow the example of the Christ. Be one of that company who accept his guidance and are seeking to do his will in the bettering of the world.

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Good-bye, dear boy, I have written too long, but it has done me good to write. If it does you a quarter of the good to read, I shall be grateful.

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Good-bye.

YOUR FATHER.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LETTERS FROM A FATHER TO HIS SON
ENTERING COLLEGE ***

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