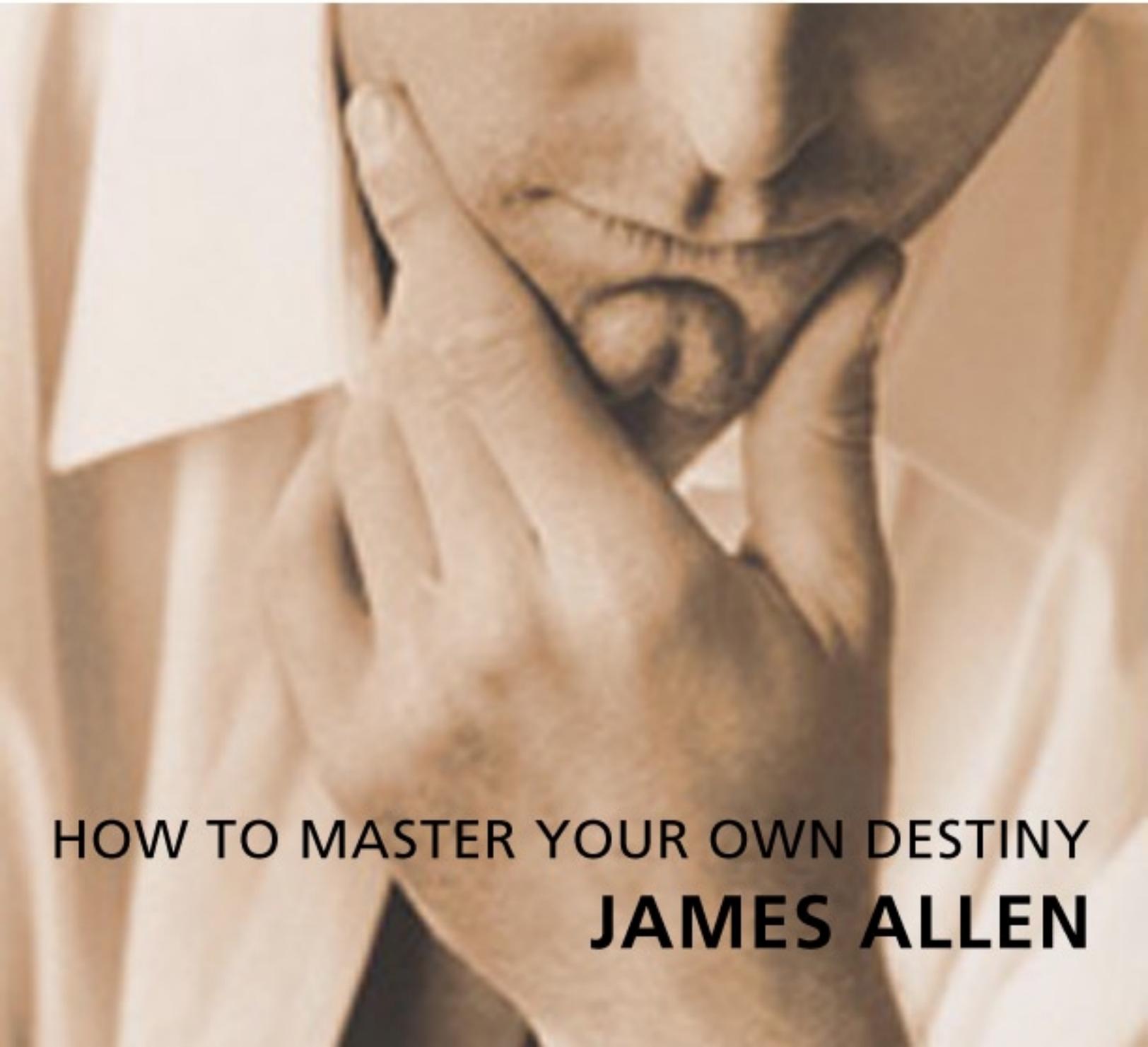


James Allen's extraordinary book *As a Man Thinketh*, a classic in print for nearly a century, has been brought up to date by the editors at Success.com!

AS YOU THINK



HOW TO MASTER YOUR OWN DESTINY
JAMES ALLEN

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INTRODUCTION BY SUCCESS.COM

Few works of literature can be said to inspire millions and help launch an entire industry, but this is one of those books. Written at the turn of the twentieth century, *As a Man Thinketh* was the masterpiece of James Allen and has influenced the work of many other authors and great thinkers, from Norman Vincent Peale to Anthony Robbins.

We at Success.com are excited to bring you a slightly revised edition of this classic. *As You Think* retains the ideas and elegant phrasing of James Allen while inserting a more inclusive, modern sensibility.

We hope you find these words as life-changing as millions of others have over the past hundred years. And for other transformational materials, we hope you will come by and visit us often at www.success.com!

FORWARD FROM THE AUTHOR

This little volume (the result of meditation and experience) is not intended as an exhaustive treatise on the much-written-upon subject of the power of thought. It is suggestive rather than explanatory, its object being to stimulate men and women to the discovery and perception of the truth that "They themselves are makers of themselves" by virtue of the thoughts which they choose and encourage; that mind is the master weaver, both of the inner garment of character and the outer garment of circumstance, and that, as they may have hitherto woven in ignorance and pain they may now weave in enlightenment and happiness.

James Allen
Ilfracombe, England

THOUGHT AND CHARACTER

“As you think, so you are.”

This not only embraces the whole of your being, but also everything that ever happens to you in life. You are, literally, what you think, and your character is the complete sum of all your thoughts.

As the plant springs from (and could not exist without) the seed, your every action springs from the hidden seeds of thought and could not have appeared without them. This applies equally to those acts called “spontaneous” and “unpremeditated” as to those which are deliberate. Action is the blossom of thought, and joy and suffering are its fruit. In this way do we harvest the sweet and bitter results of our own activities.

*Thought in the mind hath made us.
What we are by thought was wrought and built.
If a man's mind hath evil thoughts,
pain comes on him as comes the wheel the ox behind.
If one endure in purity of thought,
Joy follows him as his own shadow—sure.*

As humans, we follow the natural laws of the universe, and cause and effect are as absolute and undeviating in the hidden realm of thought as in the world of visible and material things. A noble and God-like character is not a thing of favor or chance, but is the natural result of continued effort in right thinking, the effect of long-cherished association with God-like thoughts. An ignoble and bestial character, by the same process, is the result of the continued harboring of groveling thoughts.

We are made or unmade by our own selves. In the armory of thought, we forge the weapons which we use to destroy ourselves. We also fashion the tools with which we build for ourselves heavenly mansions of joy and strength and peace. By the right choice and true application of thought, we ascend to the divine perfection. By the abuse and wrong application of thought, we descend below the level of the beast. Between these two extremes are all the grades of character, and we are their makers and masters.

Of all the beautiful truths pertaining to the soul that have been restored and brought to light in this age, none is more gladdening or fruitful of divine promise and confidence than this – that we are the masters of thought, the molders of character, and the makers and shapers of condition, environment, and destiny.

As beings of power, intelligence, and love, and the master of our own thoughts, we hold the keys to every situation, and contain within ourselves that transforming and regenerative power by which we may make ourselves what we will.

We are always the master of our life, even in our weakest and most abandoned state. But if we attempt to impose order while weak and degraded, we become the foolish master who misgoverns his or her "household." When we begin to reflect upon our condition and search diligently for the laws upon which the world is established, we then become the wise master, directing his or her energies with intelligence and attaching his or her thoughts to fruitful issues. Such is the conscious master, and a person can only become such a conscious master by discovering within himself or herself the laws of thought. This discovery is totally a matter of application, self-analysis, and experience.

Only by much searching and mining are gold and diamonds obtained,

and you can find every truth connected with your being if you will dig deep into the mine of your soul. You may easily prove that you are the maker of your character and the builder of your destiny if you will watch, control, and alter your thoughts, tracing their effects upon yourself, upon others, and upon your life and circumstances. Doing this, you may link cause and effect by patient practice and investigation. And utilizing your every experience – even the most trivial, everyday occurrence – as a means of obtaining that knowledge of yourself which is understanding, wisdom, power. In this direction, as in no other, is the law absolute that “The person who seeks, finds; and to the one that knocks, it shall be opened.” For only by patience, practice, and ceaseless importunity can you enter the door of the temple of knowledge.

EFFECT OF THOUGHT ON CIRCUMSTANCE

A person's mind may be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild; but whether cultivated or neglected, it must, and will, grow. If no useful seeds are put into it, then an abundance of useless weed-seeds will fall there and will continue to produce their kind. Just as a gardener cultivates his or her plot, keeping it free from weeds, and growing the flowers and fruits which he or she requires, so may you tend the garden of your mind, weeding out all the wrong, useless and impure thoughts, and cultivating toward perfection the flowers and fruits of right, useful and pure thoughts. By pursuing this process, you sooner or later will discover that you are the master gardener of his soul, the director of your life. You also reveal, within yourself, the flaws of thought, and understand, with ever-increasing accuracy, how the powers of thought and the mind operate in the shaping of character, circumstances, and destiny.

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

You are where you are by the law of your being; the thoughts you have built into your character have brought you there, and in the arrangement of your life, there is no element of chance. All is the result of a law which cannot err. This is just as true for those who feel "out of harmony" with their surroundings as of those who are contented with them.

As a progressive and evolving species, we are where we are in order to learn how to transcend our current circumstances. And as we learn the spiritual lesson that any circumstance contains for us, it passes away and gives place to other circumstances.

We suffer because of our circumstances only as long as we believe ourselves to be the creature of outside conditions, but when we realize that we are a creative power, and that we may command the hidden soil and seeds of our being out of which circumstances grow; we then become the rightful master of ourselves.

Everyone who has at any time practiced self-control knows that circumstances grow out of thought, for they will have noticed that the alteration in their circumstances has been in exact ratio with their altered mental condition. So true is this that when a person earnestly applies himself or herself to remedy the defects in his or her character, and makes swift and marked progress, he or she passes rapidly through a succession of vicissitudes.

The soul attracts that which it secretly harbors, that which it loves, and also that which it fears. It reaches the height of its cherished aspirations; it falls to the level of its unchastened desires, and circumstances are the means by which the soul receives its own. Every thought-seed sown or allowed to fall into the mind, and to take root there, produces another just like it, blossoming sooner or later into action, and bearing its own fruit of opportunity and circumstance.

Good thoughts bear good fruit, bad thoughts bad fruit. The outer world of circumstances shapes itself to the inner world of thought, and both pleasant and unpleasant external conditions are factors which make for the ultimate good of the individual. As the reaper of our own harvest, we learn both of suffering and bliss.

Following our innermost desires, aspirations, and thoughts, by which we allow ourselves to be dominated (pursuing the will-o'-the-wisps of impure imaginings or steadfastly walking the highway of strong and high endeavor), we at last arrive at their fruition and fulfillment in the outer conditions of our lives.

The laws of growth and adjustment apply everywhere. A person does not come to the welfare office or the jail by a chance of fate or circumstance, but by the pathway of negative thoughts and base desires. Nor does a pure-minded person fall suddenly into crime by stress of any mere external force. The criminal thought had long been secretly fostered in the heart, and the hour of opportunity revealed its gathered power. Circumstance does not make the person; it reveals the person to him- or herself. It is impossible to descend into vice and its attendant sufferings without negative thinking. Nor is it possible to ascend into virtue and pure happiness without the continued cultivation of virtuous aspirations. We are, therefore, as the masters of thought, our own maker and the shaper of and author of environment. Through every step of its earthly journey, the soul attracts those combinations of conditions which are the reflections of its own purity and impurity, its strength and weakness.

People do not attract that which they want, but that which they are. Their whims, fancies, and ambitions are thwarted at every step, but their inmost thoughts and desires are fed with their own food, be it foul or clean. We are manacled only by ourselves; thought and action are the jailors of Fate. They are also the angels of Freedom. We do not get what we wish and pray for, but what we justly earn. Our wishes and prayers are only gratified and answered when they harmonize with our thoughts and actions. In the light of this truth, what, then, is the meaning of "fighting against circumstances?" It means that a person is continually revolting against an effect without, while all the time the cause is nourished and preserved in his or her heart. That cause may take

the form of a conscious vice or an unconscious weakness, but whatever it is, it stubbornly hinders the efforts of its possessor and thus calls aloud for remedy.

People are anxious to improve their circumstances but are unwilling to improve themselves; they therefore remain bound.

Here is a woman who is wretchedly poor. She is extremely anxious that her surroundings and home comforts should improve, yet all the time she neglects her work and considers she is justified in trying to deceive her employer on the ground of her low wage. Such a person does not understand the simplest rudiments of those principles which are the basis of true prosperity, and is not only totally unfitted to rise out of her unfortunate situation, but is actually attracting to herself a still deeper wretchedness by dwelling in, and acting upon, indolent and deceptive thoughts.

Here is a rich man who is the victim of a painful and persistent disease as the result of gluttony. He is willing to give large sums of money to get rid of it, but he will not sacrifice his gluttonous desires. He wants to gratify his taste for rich and unnatural foods and have his health, as well. Such a man is totally unfit to have health, because he has not yet learned the first principles of a healthy life.

Here is an employer who adopts dishonest measures to avoid paying the regulation wage, and, in the hope of making larger profits, reduces the wages of his employees. Such a person is altogether unfitted for prosperity. And when he finds himself bankrupt, both as regards reputation and riches, he blames circumstances, not knowing that he is the sole author of his condition.

I have introduced these three cases merely as illustrative of the truth

that people are the authors (though nearly always unconsciously) of their circumstances, and that, whilst aiming at the good end, they are continually frustrating its accomplishment by encouraging thoughts and desires which cannot possibly harmonize with that end. Such cases could be multiplied and varied almost indefinitely, but this is not necessary. You may, if you like, trace the action of the laws of thought in your own mind and life, and until this is done, mere external facts cannot serve as a ground of reasoning.

Circumstances, however, are so complicated, thought is so deeply rooted, and the conditions of happiness vary so vastly with individuals, that a person's entire soul condition cannot be judged by another from the external aspect of his or her life alone.

Someone may be honest in certain ways, yet suffer misfortune. Someone else may be dishonest in certain directions, yet acquire wealth. But the conclusion usually formed (that the one person fails because of his or her particular honesty, and that the other prospers because of his or her particular dishonesty) is the result of a superficial judgment, which assumes that the dishonest person is almost totally corrupt, and honest person almost entirely virtuous.

In the light of a deeper knowledge and wider experience, such judgment is found to be erroneous. The dishonest person may have some admirable virtues which the other does not possess; and the honest person may have obnoxious vices which are absent in the other. The honest person reaps the good results of his honest thoughts and acts and also brings upon himself the sufferings which his or her vices produce. The dishonest person likewise garners his or her own suffering and happiness.

It is pleasing to human vanity to believe that one suffers because of one's virtue; but not until a person has rid his mind of every sickly, bitter, and

impure thought can he or she be in a position to know and declare that his sufferings are the result of his or her good aspects, and not of bad qualities. And a short while on the journey to reaching that supreme perfection, that person will have found, working in his or her mind and life, the great law which is absolutely just, and which cannot, therefore, give good for evil, evil for good. Possessed of such knowledge, that person will then know, looking back upon his or her past ignorance and blindness, that his life is, and always was, justly ordered, and that all past experiences, good and bad, were the equitable outworking of his or her evolving, yet unevolved self.

Good thoughts and actions can never produce bad results. Bad thoughts and actions can never produce good results. This is but saying that nothing can come from corn but corn, nothing from nettles but nettles. People understand this law in the natural world, and they work with it, but few understand it in the mental and moral world (though its operation there is just as simple and undeviating), and they, therefore, do not cooperate with it.

Suffering is always the effect of wrong thought in some direction. It is an indication that the individual is out of harmony with himself or herself, with the law of his or her being. The sole and supreme use of suffering is to purify, to burn out all that is useless and impure. Suffering ceases for the person who is pure. There could be no object in burning gold after the waste material has been removed, and a perfectly pure and enlightened being could not suffer.

The circumstances which we encounter suffering are the result of our own mental inharmony. The circumstances we encounter with blessedness are the result of our own mental harmony. Blessedness, not material possessions, is the measure of right thought; wretchedness, not lack of material possessions, is the measure of wrong thought. A person may

be cursed and rich; a person may be blessed and poor. Blessedness and riches are only joined together when the riches are rightly and wisely used. And the poor person only descends into wretchedness when he regards his lot as a burden unjustly imposed.

Poverty and unchecked indulgence are the two extremes of wretchedness. They are both equally unnatural and the result of mental disorder. A person is not rightly conditioned until he or she is a happy, healthy, and prosperous being; and happiness, health, and prosperity are the result of a harmonious adjustment of the inner with the outer of the person with his or her surroundings.

A person only begins to be a mature adult when he ceases to whine and speak negatively and commences to search for the hidden justice which regulates our lives. And that person begins to live by that law, ceases to accuse others as the cause of his or her condition, and builds himself or herself up in strong and noble thoughts. He or she ceases to fight against circumstances, but begins to use them as aids to more rapid progress, and as a means of discovering the hidden powers and possibilities within himself or herself.

Law, not confusion, is the dominating principle in the universe; justice, not injustice, is the soul and substance of life. Righteousness, not corruption, is the molding and moving force in the spiritual government of the world. This being so, we have but to right ourselves to find that the universe is right. And during the process of putting ourselves right, we will find that as we change the way we think about things and other people, things and other people will change in relation to us.

The proof of this truth is in every person, and it is therefore easy to investigate and prove through self-analysis. Let us radically alter our thoughts, and we will be astonished at the rapid transformation it will

effect in the material conditions of our lives. We imagine that thought can be kept secret, but it cannot. It rapidly crystallizes into habit, and habit solidifies into circumstance. Bestial thoughts crystallize into habits of drunkenness and sensuality, which solidify into circumstances of destitution and disease. Negative thoughts of every kind crystallize into enervating and confusing habits, which solidify into distracting and adverse circumstances. Thoughts of fear, doubt, and indecision crystallize into weak, immature, and irresolute habits, which solidify into circumstances of failure, indigence, and slavish dependence. Lazy thoughts crystallize into habits of uncleanness and dishonesty, which solidify into circumstances of foulness and beggary. Hateful and condemnatory thoughts crystallize into habits of accusation and violence, which solidify into circumstances of injury and persecution. Selfish thoughts of all kinds crystallize into selfish habits, which solidify into distressful circumstances.

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

A particular train of thought persisted in, be it good or bad, cannot fail to produce its results on the character and circumstances. We cannot directly choose our circumstances, but we can choose our thoughts,

and so we indirectly, yet surely, shape our circumstances. Nature helps everyone toward the results of the thoughts which he most encourages, and opportunities are presented which will most speedily bring to the surface both the good and the evil thoughts.

If we stop our negative thoughts, all the world will soften towards us and be ready to help us. If we put away our weakly and sickly thoughts, the opportunities will spring up on every hand to aid our strong resolves. If we encourage good thoughts, no hard fate shall bind us down to wretchedness and shame. The world is your kaleidoscope, and the varying combinations of colors which at every succeeding moment it presents to you are the exquisitely adjusted pictures of your ever-moving thoughts.

*You will be what you will to be;
Let failure find its false content
In that poor word, "environment,"
But spirit scorns it, and is free.
It masters time, it conquers space;
It crows that boastful trickster, Chance,
And bids the tyrant Circumstance
Uncrown, and fill a servant's place.
The human Will, that force unseen,
The offspring of deathless Soul,
Can hew a way to any goal,
Though walls of granite intervene.
Be not impatient in delay,
But wait as one who understands;
When spirit rises and commands,
The gods are ready to obey.*

EFFECTS OF THOUGHTS ON THE BODY

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

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

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

People will continue to have impure and poisoned blood, so long as they propagate unclean thoughts. Out of a clean heart comes a clean life and a clean body. Thought is the fount of action, life and manifestation; make the fountain pure, and all will be pure. Change of diet will not help a person who will not change his thoughts. When you make your thoughts pure, you no longer desire impure food.

Clean thoughts make clean habits. The so-called saint who does not wash his or her body is not a saint. The person who has strengthened and

purified his or her thoughts does not need to consider the malevolent. If you would perfect your body, guard your mind. If you would renew your body, beautify your mind. Thoughts of malice, envy, disappointment, and despondency rob the body of its health and grace. A sour face does not come by chance; it is made by sour thoughts. Wrinkles that mar are drawn by folly, passion, and pride. I know a woman of ninety-six who has the bright, innocent face of a girl. I know a man well under middle age whose face is drawn into inharmonious contours. The one is the result of a sweet and sunny disposition; the other is the outcome of passion and discontent.

As you cannot have a sweet and wholesome abode unless you admit the air and sunshine freely into your rooms. A strong body and a bright, happy, or serene appearance can only result from the free admittance into the mind of thoughts of joy and goodwill and serenity.

On the faces of the aged, there are wrinkles made by sympathy, others by strong and pure thought, and others are carved by passion; who cannot distinguish them? With those who have lived righteously, age is calm, peaceful, and softly mellowed, like the setting sun. I have recently seen a philosopher on his death-bed. He was not old except in years. He died as sweetly and peacefully as he had lived.

There is no physician like cheerful thought for dissipating the ills of the body; there is no comforter to compare with goodwill for dispersing the shadows of grief and sorrow. To live continually in thoughts of ill-will, cynicism, suspicion, and envy, is to be confined in a self-made prison hole. But to think well of all, to be cheerful with all, to patiently learn to find the good in all – such unselfish thoughts are the very portals of heaven; and to dwell day by day in thoughts of peace toward every creature will bring abounding peace to their possessor.

THOUGHT AND PURPOSE

Until thought is linked with purpose, there is no intelligent accomplishment. With the majority of people, the boat of thought is allowed to “drift” upon the ocean of life. Aimlessness is a vice, and such drifting must not continue for the person who would steer clear of catastrophe and destruction.

They who have no central purpose in their life fall an easy prey to petty worries, fears, troubles, and self-pityings, all of which are indications of weakness, which lead, just as surely as deliberately planned sins (though by a different route), to failure, unhappiness, and loss. Weakness cannot persist in a power-evolving universe. You should conceive of a legitimate purpose in his heart and set out to accomplish it. You should make this purpose the centralizing point of your thoughts. It may take the form of a spiritual ideal, or it may be a worldly object, according to your nature at the time being. Whichever it is, you should steadily focus the power of your thoughts upon the object you set before you. You should make this purpose your supreme duty and devote yourself to its attainment, not allowing your thoughts to wander away into ephemeral fancies, longings, and imaginings. This is the royal road to self-control and true concentration of thought. Even if you fail again and again to accomplish your purpose – as you must until weakness is overcome – the strength of character gained will be the measure of your true success, and this will form a new starting point for future power and triumph.

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

The weakest soul, knowing its own weakness, and believing this truth – that strength can only be developed by effort and practice – will, thus believing, at once begin to exert itself. And, adding effort to effort, patience to patience, and strength to strength, this soul will never cease to develop and will at last grow divinely strong. As the physically weak can make their bodies strong by careful and patient training, so can people of weak thoughts can make their minds strong by exercising themselves in right thinking. To put away aimlessness and weakness and to begin to think with purpose is to enter the ranks of those strong ones who only recognize failure as one of the pathways to attainment. Those who make all conditions serve them and who think strongly also take fearless action and accomplish masterfully.

Having conceived of your purpose, you should mentally mark out a straight pathway to its achievement, looking neither to the right nor left. Doubts and fears should be rigorously excluded. They are disintegrating elements which break up the straight line of effort, rendering it crooked, ineffectual, useless. Thoughts of doubt and fear can never accomplish anything. They always lead to failure. Purpose, energy, power to do, and all strong thoughts cease when doubt and fear creep in. The will to do springs from the knowledge that we can do. Doubt and fear are the great enemies of knowledge, and those who encourage them, who do not slay them, thwart themselves at every step.

They who have conquered doubt and fear have conquered failure. Their every thought is allied with power, and all difficulties are bravely met and overcome. Their purposes are seasonably planted, and they bloom and bring forth fruit that does not fall prematurely to the ground. Thought allied fearlessly to purpose becomes creative force. They who know this are ready to become something higher and stronger than a bundle of wavering thoughts and fluctuating sensations. They who do this have become the conscious and intelligent wielder of his mental powers.

THE THOUGHT-FACTOR IN ACHIEVEMENT

All that we achieve and all that we fail to achieve is the direct result of our own thoughts. In a justly ordered universe, where loss of balance would mean total destruction, individual responsibility must be absolute. Each person's weakness and strength, purity and impurity, are his or her own and not another person's. They are brought about by that person and not by another; and they can only be altered by that person, never by another. That person's condition is also his or her own, and not another person's. His or her sufferings and his happiness are evolved from within. That person is, literally, what he or she thinks about; that person remains what he or she thinks about.

A strong person cannot help a weaker unless that weaker is willing to be helped. And even then the weak person must become strong for himself or herself. The weak person must, by his or her own efforts, develop the strength that is so admired in the stronger. Everyone must alter his or her own condition.

It has been usual for people to think, "Many people are slaves because one is an oppressor; let us hate the oppressor!" But there is amongst an increasing few a tendency to reverse this judgment and to say, "One person is an oppressor because many are slaves; let us despise the slaves." The truth is that oppressor and slaves are cooperators in ignorance and, while seeming to afflict each other, are in reality, afflicting themselves. A perfect knowledge perceives the action of law in the weakness of the oppressed and the misapplied power of the oppressor. A perfect love, seeing the suffering which both states entail, condemns neither; a perfect compassion embraces both oppressor and oppressed. The person who has conquered weakness and has pushed away all selfish thoughts belongs neither to oppressor nor oppressed. That person is free.

We can only rise, conquer, and achieve by lifting up our thoughts. We can only remain weak, abject, and miserable by refusing to lift up our thoughts.

Before we can achieve anything, even in worldly things, we must lift our thoughts above slavish animal indulgence. We may not necessarily, in order to succeed, give up all animality and selfishness, but a portion of it must, at least, be sacrificed. A person whose first thought is bestial indulgence could neither think clearly nor plan methodically. That person could not find and develop his or her latent resources and would fail in any undertaking. Not having begun to maturely and responsibly control his or her thoughts, that person is not in a position to control affairs and to adopt serious responsibilities. He or she is not fit to act independently and stand alone, but is limited only by the thoughts that he chooses.

There can be no progress nor achievement without sacrifice. Our worldly success will be proportional to the degree that we sacrifice our confused animal thoughts and fix our mind on the development of our plans and the strengthening of our resolution and self-reliance. The higher we lift our thoughts, the greater will be our success, the more blessed and enduring will be our achievements.

The universe does not favor the greedy, the dishonest, or the vicious, although on the mere surface it sometimes may appear to do so. It helps the honest, the magnanimous, and the virtuous. All the great teachers of the ages have declared this in varying ways, and to prove it and to know it, we have but to persist in making ourselves increasingly virtuous by lifting our thoughts.

Intellectual achievements are the result of thought consecrated to the search for knowledge or for the beautiful and true in nature. Such achievements may sometimes be connected with vanity and ambition,

but they are not the outcome of those characteristics. They are the natural outgrowth of long and arduous effort, and of pure and unselfish thoughts.

Spiritual achievements are the consummation of holy aspirations. The person who lives constantly in the conception of noble and lofty thoughts, who dwells upon all that is pure and selfless, will, as surely as the sun reaches its zenith and the moon its full, become wise and noble in character and rise into a position of influence and blessedness. Achievement of any kind is the crown of effort and of thought. By the aid of self-control, resolution, purity, righteousness, and well-directed thought, a person ascends. By the aid of animality, indolence, impurity, corruption, and confusion of thought, a person descends.

A person may rise to high success in the world, even to lofty attitudes in the spiritual realm, and again descend into weakness and wretchedness by allowing arrogant, selfish, and corrupt thoughts to take possession of his or her mind. Victories attained by right thought can be maintained only by watchfulness. Many give way when success is assured and rapidly fall back into failure.

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

VISIONS AND IDEALS

The dreamers are the saviors of the world. As the visible world is sustained by the invisible, so people, through all their trials and sins and sordid vocations, are nourished by the beautiful visions of their solitary dreamers. Humanity cannot forget its dreamers; it cannot let their ideals fade and die; it lives in them; it knows them as the realities which it shall one day see and know.

Composer, sculptor, painter, poet, prophet, sage – these are the makers of the after-world, the architects of heaven. The world is beautiful because they have lived in it. Without them, laboring humanity would surely perish.

The person who cherishes a beautiful vision, a lofty ideal in his or her heart, will one day realize it. Columbus cherished a vision of another world, and he discovered it. Copernicus fostered the vision of a multiplicity of worlds and a wider universe, and he revealed it. Buddha beheld the vision of a spiritual world of stainless beauty and perfect peace, and he entered into it.

Cherish your visions; cherish your ideals. Cherish the music that stirs in your heart, the beauty that forms in your mind, the loveliness that drapes your purest thoughts. For out of them will grow all delightful conditions, all heavenly environment; of these, if you but remain true to them, your world will at last be built. To desire is to obtain; to aspire is to achieve. Shall our basest desires receive the fullest measure of gratification, and our purest aspirations starve for lack of sustenance? Such is not the Law. Such a condition can never aspire to “Ask and receive.”

Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so shall you become. Your vision is the promise of what you shall one day be; your ideal is the prophecy of what you shall at last unveil.

The greatest achievement was at first and for a time a dream. The oak sleeps in the acorn; the bird waits in the egg. And in the highest vision of a soul a waking angle stirs. Dreams are the seedlings of realities.

Your circumstances may be uncongenial, but they shall not remain so if you only perceive an ideal and strive to reach it. You cannot travel within and stand still without.

Here is a youth hard pressed by poverty and labor. Confined long hours in an unhealthy workshop; unschooled and lacking all the arts of refinement. But he dreams of better things. He thinks of intelligence, of refinement, of grace and beauty. He conceives of, mentally builds up, an ideal condition of life. The wider liberty and a larger scope takes possession of him. Unrest urges him to action, and he uses all his spare times and means to the development of his latent powers and resources. Very soon, so altered has his mind become that the workshop can no longer hold him. It has become so out of harmony with his mind-set that it falls out of his life as a garment is cast aside. And with the growth of opportunities that fit the scope of his expanding powers, he passes out of it altogether. Years later, we see this youth as a grown man. We find him a master of certain forces of the mind that he wields with worldwide influence and almost unequalled power. In his hands, he holds the cords of gigantic responsibilities; he speaks and lives are changed; men and women hang upon his words and remold their characters. Sun-like, he becomes the fixed and luminous center around which innumerable destinies revolve. He has realized the vision of his youth. He has become one with his ideal.

And you, too, will realize the vision (not just the idle wish) of your heart, be it base or beautiful, or a mixture of both. For you will always gravitate toward that which you secretly love most. Into your hands will be placed the exact results of your own thoughts. You will receive that which you earn; no more, no less. Whatever your present environment may be, you will fall, remain, or rise with your thoughts – your vision, your ideal. You will become as small as your controlling desire, as great as your dominant aspiration. The thoughtless, the ignorant, and the indolent, seeing only the apparent effects of things and not the things themselves, talk of luck, of fortune, and chance. Seeing a woman grow rich, they say, “How lucky she is!” Observing a man become skilled intellectually, they exclaim, “How highly favored he is!” And noting the saintly character and wide influence of someone else, they remark, “How chance helps her at every turn!” They do not see the trials and failures and struggles that these people have encountered in order to gain their experience. They have no knowledge of the sacrifices they have made, of the undaunted efforts they have put forth, of the faith they have exercised so that they might overcome the apparently insurmountable and realize the vision of their heart. They do not know the darkness and the heartaches; they only see the light and joy, and call it “luck.”

Do not see the long, arduous journey, but only behold the pleasant goal and call it “good fortune.” Do not understand the process, but only perceive the result, and call it “chance.”

In all human affairs, there are efforts and there are results. The strength of the effort is the measure of the result. Gifts, powers, material, intellectual, and spiritual possessions are the fruits of effort. They are thoughts completed, objectives accomplished, visions realized.

The vision that you glorify in your mind, the ideal that you enthrone in your heart – this you will build your life by. This you will become.

SERENITY

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

We become calm to the degree that we understand ourselves as thought-evolved beings. For such knowledge necessitates the understanding of others as the result of thought, and as we develop a right understanding and sees ever more clearly the internal relations of things by the action of cause and effect, we cease to fuss, fume, worry, and grieve. We remains poised, steadfast, serene.

The calm person, having learned how to govern himself or herself, knows how to adapt to others. And they, in turn, reverence that person's spiritual strength. They feel that they can learn from and rely upon him or her. The more tranquil a person becomes, the greater is his success, his influence, his power for good. Even the ordinary trader will find his business prosperity increase as he develops a greater self-control and equanimity, for people will always prefer to deal with someone whose demeanor is equitable.

The strong, calm person is always loved and revered. He or she is like a shade-giving tree in a thirsty land, or a sheltering rock in a storm. Who does not love a tranquil heart, a sweet-tempered, balanced life? It does not matter whether it rains or shines, or what changes come to those who possess these blessings, for they are always serene and calm.

That exquisite poise of character that we call serenity is the last lesson of culture. It is the flowering of life, the fruitage of the soul. It is precious as

wisdom – more desirable than fine gold. How insignificant mere money-seeking looks in comparison with a serene life. A life that dwells in the ocean of truth, beneath the waves, beyond the reach of the tempests, in the Eternal Calm!

How many people we know who sour their lives, who ruin all that is sweet and beautiful by explosive tempers, who destroy their poise of character and make bad blood! It often seems the great majority of people ruin their lives and mar their happiness by lack of self-control. How few people we meet in life who are well balanced, who have that exquisite poise which is characteristic of the finished character!

Yes, humanity surges with uncontrolled passion, is tumultuous with ungoverned grief, is blown about by anxiety and doubt. Only the wise person, only he or she whose thoughts are controlled and purified, makes the winds and the storms of the soul obey.

Tempest-tossed souls, wherever you may be, under whatever conditions you may live, know this: In the ocean of life the isles of blessedness are smiling and the sunny shore of your ideal awaits your coming. Keep your hands firmly upon the helm of thought. In the core of your soul reclines the commanding Master; He does but sleep; wake Him. Self-control is strength. Right thought is mastery. Calmness is power. Say unto your heart, "Peace. Be still!"