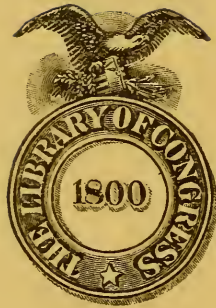


If I Were A College Student

Charles F. Thwing



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IF I WERE A COLLEGE STUDENT

BY

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TO THE
College Men

OF THE UNITED STATES

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS WITH HONOR AND REGARD

DEDICATED

IF I WERE A COLLEGE STUDENT

IF I were a college student I would —

(1.) Care for my health.

In 1880 Mr. Froude wrote to Hallam Tennyson, saying :

“Your father has two existences. Spiritually he lives in all our minds (in mine he has lived for nearly forty years), in forms imperishable as diamonds which time and change have no power over. The mortal case of him is of frailer material, and, as I believe he takes extremely little care of it himself, the charge falls on you, and the world will expect an account of it at your hands. Centuries will pass before we have another real full-grown poet. The seeds of time I suppose are sown and grow for a bit, and the

reviews clap their hands. But they come to nothing. The moral atmosphere is too pestilential. The force which there is in the world is all destructive and disintegrating, and heaven knows when any organizing life will show itself again.

“We must keep what we have got to the latest moment and be thankful for him.”

Each of us also has two existences, but we have no Froude to warn a son of ours to take care of his father. Each man of us must take care of himself, and must take care of that existence which, if we call it the lower, is still the nurse of the higher, and which, if we call it material and temporal, is yet a condition for the fostering of the spiritual and the eternal.

Health is both an agent and a condition for enjoyment or for service. It is, in college as well as out of college, nourished by three simple methods: food, sleep, exercise. College men usually eat too much of ill-prepared food, and eat it too fast; they usually do not sleep

enough the first part of the night; and they exercise too little and not over wisely. The food of the college men and women should be simple, it should be abundant, and it should be eaten, seasoned, and salted with talk. Concerning what is simple food, of course, opinions differ. My friend, Dr. Powell, tells of a patient who complained of a pain in the stomach. The doctor inquired about his diet.

"We live very simply, very simply," replied the man.

"Yes," said the doctor, "but tell me what you had for breakfast this morning."

"A very simple breakfast we had, very simple breakfast; we had doughnuts and Bologna sausage." Such a simple breakfast is not one best fitted for the college boy or girl.

The student is too much inclined to economize in sleep. The student is really very busy. His chief lack is a lack of time. Every teacher is eager to get him to do all the work

he can do, and a bit more. Every organization wants his loyalty and service. He is liable to come to the end of the day with many tasks still remaining undone. The late evening is the time for his working. The last loitering caller has gone. The halls are still. He can now get his time in long periods. His sense of power is quickened. His mind is alert. He feels he can now do three hours' work in one. Nine o'clock: "Good stuff — this Calculus — I believe I'll elect it next term." Ten o'clock: "Making fine progress. Hegel has more sense than I ever gave him credit for." Eleven o'clock: "Goethe can master the human heart, can't he! This is great." Twelve o'clock: "Great thought, that! — I must write a book sometime on that. Midnight? but I can't go to bed now."

But such work, noble, large, inspiring, — done under such conditions, exciting, exhausting — takes the precious life-blood of the student. He cannot constantly follow such a method without suffering dire calamities. I

have seen too many bright minds clouded, too many strong wills weakened, too many promising careers wrecked, not to warn the student. At least eight hours should every student sleep. A fair proportion is: to sleep eight, to study ten, to talking and to walking, to eating and to exercising and to fun six hours, of every twenty-four.

The third element of this trinity of healthful forces is exercise. Exercise has become a matter of expert opinion, and the expert is the doctor. I speak as a layman. But to me the chief matter in exercise is to lay in strength sufficient not only to preserve one's vigor in college, but also to carry one through one's whole life. I notice that men who rowed in college, have a different bearing for decades after graduation from that of men who did not row. Their backs are broader, their shoulders squarer, their legs better built out. Not all men can row. But every man can, in the gymnasium, in four years, make and harden muscles which will bless him for forty years.

We often speak of the college man as having reserve power. The remark should apply as exactly to the physical as to the intellectual constitution. But even without the gymnasium one can do much.

“How did you get your fine chest?” I asked a doctor yesterday. “When I was a student,” he answered, “before going to bed — and I had to go to bed in the same room in which I had been studying three hours — I would go out-of-doors, run up a hill, and take several long and deep breaths.” A little care in taking simple exercise preserves and increases the health of the student.

Many years ago I had a friend, Ellsworth Eliot Hunt, of whom an officer of Princeton University has recently written me as follows: “In June, 1875, he was awarded the English Salutatory oration, and also won the Class of 1860 Fellowship — Experimental Science. It was said at the time that he could have won any Fellowship he might have tried for. He was considered the most able man in college.

On his Fellowship he went to Germany for a year, and then entered the College of Physicians and Surgeons at New York, receiving his M.D. in 1878, and his M.A. from Princeton. He served on the staff of Roosevelt Hospital for a time and then went back to Europe. He practised medicine in New York afterward. Consumption developing, he gave up work and sought health at Trenton and, in 1884, in the South. He died, however, in August, 1886."

A simple and most moving record. Men die of consumption who observe the laws of health. But between the lines of this simple record I read of long days of toil unrelieved by fresh air or happy sport, and short nights in which every brief hour of sleep Hunt felt was stolen from his research. It is a typical case: — brilliant powers wasted for present service, abounding hopefulness of usefulness blasted, by reason of the failure to observe the most common laws.

(2.) If I were a student I would try to

cultivate the major graces. I say major graces. Usually we speak of the virtues as major and the graces as minor. I have no purpose to depreciate virtue or the virtues. But I do wish to make significant the place which the graces play in the life of the student. The graces constitute the lady or the gentleman. These elements are far more contributory to the happiness and success of the career of the student than he usually believes. There are many men who are faithful, honest, able, who yet fail to secure the results which faithfulness, honesty, ability, ought to secure, for the simple reason that they are not gentlemen. They are not *likable* and they are not liked.

The one comprehensive element in the major graces is graciousness. Graciousness is the one condition out of which the individual graces grow and blossom. It is appreciation of the other man at his full worth, and even at more than his full worth. It is a favoring of him who is undeserving or even ill-deserving. It is putting the other in the place of one's self.

It is not only the Golden Rule, but it is even more ; it is not simply loving your neighbor as you love yourself, but loving him a little better. It is certainly treating him with an honesty and a favoritism higher than you would demand of yourself for yourself. Its significance is well embodied in the phrase, "After you, sir."

Of course, graciousness is never to become fawning. Fawning is born of the desire to secure certain favors from a superior. It is essentially base and mean. Graciousness is founded upon the genuine belief that the person to whom one is gracious has a certain right to receive a favor, or rather that the one who is gracious has a certain right to bestow a favor upon the ill-deserving or undeserving. Fawning is asking favors ; graciousness is giving favors. Graciousness is very well described in saying, it "suffereth long, and is kind ; envieth not ; vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh

no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

In this song of graciousness are one or two notes on which I wish to linger. One of these notes is the relative importance of a series of events and the relative unimportance of a single event. Every event in a career is joined to every other. Each event may be said to be significant. Sometimes one event is exceedingly significant. As a single spoonful of wine is sufficient to indicate to the taster the worth of the whole cask, so a single event may prove whether one is a gentleman. But the college student is in danger of forgetting that this one event, or act, or process is only one. He is prone to believe that success or failure in the one condition determines success or failure in the whole career. He lives too much in to-day ; and he is often too willing, in order to win to-day, to barter his chance of winning the everlasting to-morrow. The price paid for the present success may be altogether too

heavy. He should learn the lesson of waiting. He should also learn the lesson of the interaction of all forces. The kindness of law and the severity of truth, the patience of hope and the energy of strength, the height of purpose and the moderation of present achievement, are all working together to bring forth on the whole the noblest and the wisest. It is much to learn to labor; it is also much to learn to wait; it is more and most to learn both to labor and to wait. Such labor and such waiting are never resultless. The sense, therefore, of the relation of things, the college student should cultivate.

In graciousness, too, if I were a student, I would not neglect the payment of special respect to those to whom special respect is due. Special respect is due to one's benefactors. I have not infrequently been made happy by expressions of satisfaction on the part of benefactors with the gratitude which beneficiaries have made known. It requires good sense and good taste to thank a benefactor properly.

But I have also heard benefactors of students of colleges, in which I have no special interest, say that not one in ten of those whom they aided ever returned to give thanks. Such silence is not golden.

Let me also add that special respect is due to one's parents. To his parents the college student owes a peculiar debt. They are giving him a training longer, finer, and more costly than nine hundred and ninety-nine other boys in every thousand receive. They have given to him not simply being, but also an education which will in most instances be determinative of his career. The college boy cannot love them too much; with all his love he cannot love them so much as they love him; and he cannot show his love too constantly or too strongly.

Graciousness, too, will lead the college man into that priceless mood and habit which is called goodfellowship. To call a man a good fellow is one of the highest compliments which can be paid to him.

I was recently asking my friend and neighbor, Mr. Mark A. Hanna, to make a speech at a college anniversary. Mr. Hanna inquired: "Why do you want me to come to a college meeting? I am no scholar."

"For three reasons," I replied. "First, because you are a member from Ohio of the United States Senate, and therefore can represent the general Government; second, because you were formerly a student in the old college; and third, because you are a very good fellow."

"That third I like," said Mr. Hanna.

What is a good fellow? It is easy to tell what he is not. He is not a prig; he is not a snob; he is not a cad; he is not a dunce; he is not usually a genius, although he may be. It is not easy to tell what he is, although it is very easy to recognize him when you have seen and heard and been with him for a quarter of an hour. The one word, it seems to me, interpretative of him is the word "sympathy." The good fellow puts himself in your place. He understands you. He feels with you. He

smiles in your laughter and is sorrowful in your tears. He can trifle when you trifle, although he is not a trifler. He can be serious in your seriousness, but he is not by nature solemn. The good fellow of the worthiest type is a great fellow. Out of and by means of his sympathy — intellectual, emotional, volitional — he leads his associates into the noblest sort of life; but his persuasiveness is so gentle and his influence is so unconscious that men often find themselves better men without knowing the process or even dreaming of the result, until the result has been secured. If I were a college student I would cultivate this sense of good-fellowship with all sorts and conditions of men. But this sense of good-fellowship allows and demands that a man shall keep himself. The attributes of companionship are never to be suffered to wear down individuality. A man cannot be a good fellow of the best type if conscience be wronged or will be weakened.

The sense of companionship in college is at

once the root out of which grows a large sense of humanity or of humanness, and is in turn the blossom of this sense of humanness. The men who do the most for man are first and foremost simply human. The men whom humanity admires are human. Humanity likes to make its heroes by the divine method of creation, in its own image. The men whose names live as rallying cries are very human men. The humanity may emerge in an intense sympathy with the religious problems of the time, as in Tennyson. The humanity may emerge in a reflection on the ethical problems of the time, as in Browning. The humanity may emerge in a large fellowship with the higher and sincerer forms of the intellectual life of the age, as in Lowell. The humanity may emerge in a deep feeling with the common difficulties of our common life, as in Whittier. But no matter in what point of application humanity touches humanity, it is still true that humanity must meet humanity. The lives which are human are the lives which live with men in

the deathless centuries. As a college man, therefore, I would put myself into all the relations of humanity. Life is measured by the variety and intensity of its relationships. Let your life be varied and intense; let it be your life vital and variable. Let all that interests humanity interest you. The hopes and the fears, the struggles that have their own reward and the struggles that result in the fruitage of purposes, — they are all a part of your being. Be a pessimist if you must be: believe that “Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne.” Be a meliorist if that seems more reasonable: believe that things, on the whole, tend toward goodness. Be an optimist if you see your way to be: believe that “standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.” But at all events believe in humanity, and so believe in humanity as to be yourself largely, magnificently human. You were a man before you were a student, you will be a man after you are a student. Be a man, large, strong, noble, while you are a student.

Through this sense of large humanity and of good fellowship one is able to decide certain college questions which the student is inclined to believe are of primary importance. He is able to decide the question of joining a fraternity—in case he receive an invitation. A fraternity unites men as individuals, each to the other. It is so far forth good. Does a fraternity, uniting men to each other, tend to separate the student from man, from the *genus homo*? If, while uniting the student to his fellows, it disunites him from man, it is so far forth bad. This is the effect of the fraternity on some men: it tends to make them seclusive and exclusive; it dwarfs them by narrowing them. This is not its effect on other men: it aids them in caring for and loving certain men, it also brings them into a closer touch and warmer sympathy with humanity itself. The narrow, priggish, and selfish fraternity man is one of the poorest specimens of the training of the American college. The broad and big, inspired and inspiring frater-

nity man is one of the noblest results of the work of the college.

(3.) If I were a student I would seek less for knowledge and more for the significance of knowledge. I would care less to be a scholar and more to be a thinker. If I could be a great scholar I might be content with being a scholar; but as this would be impossible I would try to be a thinker. For the thinker is needed in American life; his presence and power are its greatest need. I play golf with one of the greatest of our financiers. In my impetuosity he said to me one day: "Play with deliberation; play with deliberation." Deliberation means what I may call intellectual and emotional thoughtfulness. "I go over my accounts," he said to me on another occasion, "once and twice and thrice, and then I go over them again, and once more, too, and then once again, to make sure I have made no mistake."

A friend came to the house of this gentleman one day and asked to see him. The

answer was given, "He cannot be seen." "Why, what is he doing?" persisted the friend. "Oh! he's upstairs; as usual, I suppose, he is thinking," was the answer. "What is the need of the chemist to-day?" I asked a chemist. "To think," was his reply. "I want you to think about my railroad, how to make it better, how to make it serve more folks," said the owner of a railroad to its superintendent.

It is such thought — accurate, thorough, comprehensive — which makes masters. Knowledge has small value. It vanishes. The college man forgets. He knows more when he enters than when he leaves college. It is a happy thing that he can forget. Facts are important, but they are far less important than is the relation of facts. Who would be a walking cyclopædia? It must be extremely disagreeable to the man who thus walks and to all who may meet him. But the having known and the having forgotten should leave a resultant of power — of power to think,

which is far more precious than the knowledge gained or lost. If I were to be a college student again I would try to make myself a man of power; and the only or chief power would be the power to think. To get this power I hope that I should be willing to do my best, however little good that might be.

(4.) If I were again to become a college student I would try to do more than my duty. It is hard enough to do one's duty — so hard that one is fairly safe in saying that no one does it; but it is not so hard to do more than one's duty. To do more than one's duty transmutes duty into grace. To do more than one's duty lifts the ought into a right. To do an act of grace is like tying wings on to one's heels; to do an act because it is right gives to the doing inspiration, quickening, life. I always have a sense of at once pity and admiration for the man who is at the foot of his class; pity, because he is there and not at some other point in the class; admiration, because he is there at all, for it is such hard

work to stay there, and it would be so easy to drop out entirely. The man at the other end does not awaken the same kind of admiration: it is easy for him to do his work, to do more than his teachers expect. I counsel my friends to take the easy part, and to stand not simply at the head, but ahead of the head. Be the rival of yourself. Let the hardest master be yourself; let the most urgent and joyous command you hear be the command of your own inner voice.

Doing more than one's duty is, of course, only saying that one is doing one's best. One can make no harder demand on one's self: others cannot rightly make a harder demand. It is told that Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, in impatience, once reprimanded a student for some deficiency. "Why do you speak angrily, sir? — indeed, I am doing the best that I can, sir." Let the student be content with this kind of work, and the teacher, knowing the truth, will also be content. Let neither student nor teacher be content with any less complete service. Mr.

Lowell once wrote to his friend, Mr. Charles Eliot Norton, about his poem, "The Cathedral." It would seem that Mr. Ruskin had expressed a liking for the great poem, but also had expressed the belief that the poem needed revision. Mr. Lowell wrote to Mr. Norton as follows: "Now Ruskin wants me to go over it with the file. That is just what I did. I wrote in pencil, then copied it out in ink, and worked over it as I have never worked over anything before. I may fairly say that there is not a word in it over which I have not thought, not an objection which I did not foresee and maturely consider." Such patience of endeavor, such detail of study, such height of aim, such willingness to be content only with the best, is to be yours. Not in work only, but in aim, in control of appetite, in fostering of pure affections, in obedience to the ought of conscience the student is to be at his best. Was it not Charles Lamb who said that all he lacked for writing like Shakespeare was a mind to? All that we lack for living our best is not a "mind to," but a will to. A great

librarian, Mr. Coxe, of the Bodleian, once remarked: "I never enter the Library without looking at the portrait of Bodley and resolving to do nothing which would have offended Sir Thomas." On the walls of his room, above the table at which he reads and thinks for days and years, let the student hang a picture of the highest, holiest, known to him. Let it inspire him never to do a thing of which that highest and holiest would disapprove. One's best may be exceedingly good, or one's best may not be so excellent as another man's good. Nevertheless each is to remember that obligation and ability are, like action and reaction in physics, always opposite and equal. One is to oblige one's self to do all that ability fits him to do, and one is to feel one's self able to do all that in any way he feels obliged to do. To do and to be the best! Highest ideal! Richest result!

The doing and the being one's best easily brings one up to the ethical and religious relations. I may as well at once confess that I as a college student would be religious. I would

not be religious for the sake of being ecclesiastical; I would be religious for the sake of being ethical and for the worth, too, of religion itself. It is pretty hard work to be moral when one is only moral; it is hard enough to be moral when one is religious, but it is much less hard than when one is simply moral. It is so thoroughly worth while to be moral that it is well to be religious. But religion, too, in and of itself puts one into relation with the Supreme Being. This relation is the highest which the college or any other men hold. The college man or any other man who declines to enter into the highest relation which he can enter is, of course, nothing less than a fool. One misses in the culture of the college the noblest elements if he leave out religion. Religion gives a sky to the student's world. It unites and correlates. It gives inspiration and a spirit of hopefulness. It enlarges, broadens, and deepens. It does for the ordinary man what poetry does for the imaginative soul. It is not so much an act as a mood. It does not *do*; it *is*.

Religion puts the student into relations which are at once the broadest and the highest. The great themes and subjects are religious. The great pictures of the world's history of art are religious. The great poems are religious poems. The great works of the architect were built for religious purposes. You are to be men of sober minds, and sober-mindedness leads to relations in thought and feeling with him who is called God. You are to be men of high purpose, and high purposing speaks to the attentive soul that "every man's life is a plan of God." You are to be men of comprehensive vision; but wide knowledge is not complete unless the spirit of man is touched by the spirit of omniscience. You are to relate your science with omniscience, your potencies with omnipotence. Make the essence and relations of life as divine and as personal as your reason allows. Adopt, if you will, the thought of Herbert Spencer, and say: "Amid the mysteries, which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about,

there will remain the one absolute certainty, that man is ever in the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed." Think, if you will, of the divine essence as an "infinite and eternal energy," and in this thought believe, in this thought live. Think of the divine essence, if you can, as a father, as a friend, as a personal lover; and make this thought a belief, a principle, an unconscious rule of conduct. Feel that your life as a result has relations with the great First Cause, and feel also that your life as a cause is a part of the Universal Life, which controls all, but is controlled by none.

If I were again to become a college man, such a student as I have pictured I believe I should try to be. Of course, I should fail, but nevertheless I should make the attempt.



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