

As a spirit, you are a part of God or the Infinite Force or Spirit of good. As such part, you are an ever-growing power which can never lessen, and must always increase, even as it has in the past through many ages always increased, and built you up, as to intelligence, to your present mental stature. The power of your mind has been growing to its present quality and clearness through many more physical lives than the one you are now living.

Through each past life you have unconsciously added to its power. Every struggle of the mind--be it struggle against pain, struggle against appetite, struggle for more skill in the doing of anything, struggle for greater advance in any art or calling, struggle and dissatisfaction at your failings and defects--is an actual pushing of the spirit to greater power, and a greater relative completion of yourself,--and with such completion, happiness. For the aim of living is happiness.

There is today more of you, and more of every desirable mental quality belonging to you, than ever before. The very dissatisfaction and discontent you may feel concerning your failings is a proof of this. If your mind was not as clear as it is, it could not see those failings. You are not now where you may have been in a mood of self-complacency, when you thought yourself about right in every respect.

Only you may, now, in looking at yourself, have swung too far in the opposite direction; and, because your eyes have been suddenly opened to certain faults, you may think these faults to be constantly increasing. They are not. The God in yourself--the ever-growing power in yourself--has made you see an incompleteness in your character; yet that incompleteness was never so near a relative completion as now. Of this the greatest proof is that you can now see what in yourself you never saw or felt before.

You may have under your house a cavity full of vermin and bad air. You were much worse off before the cavity was found, repulsive as it may be to you; and now that it is found, you may be sure it will be cleansed. There may be cavities in our mental architecture abounding in evil element, and there is no need to be discouraged as the God in our self shows them to us. There is no need of saying, "I'm such an imperfect creature I'm sure I can never cure all my faults." Yes, you can. You are curing them now. Every protest of your mind against your fault is a push of the spirit forward.

Only you must not expect to cure them all in an hour, a day, a week, or a year. There will never be a time in your future existence, but that you can see where you can improve yourself. If you see possibility of improvement, you must of course see the defect to be improved. Or, in other words, you see for yourself a still greater completion, a still greater elaboration, a finer and finer shading of your character, a more and more complicated distribution of the Force always coming to you. So you will cease this fretting over your being such an imperfect creature when you find, as you will, that you are one of the "temples of God" ever being built by yourself into ever-increasing splendor.

No talent of yours ever stops growing any more than the tree stops growing in winter. If you are learning to paint or draw or act or speak in public or do anything, and cease your practice entirely for a month or a year or two years, and then take it up again, you will find after a little that an increase of that talent has come; that you have new ideas concerning it, and new power for execution.

You ask, "What is the aim of life?" In a sense, you cannot aim your own life. There is a destiny that aims it,--a law which governs and carries it. To what? To an ever-increasing and illimitable capacity for

happiness as your power increases, and increase it must. You cannot stop growing, despite all appearances to the contrary.

The pain you have suffered has been through that same growth of the spirit pressing you harder and harder against what caused you misery, so that at last you should take that pain as a proof that you were on some wrong path, out of which you must get as soon as possible; and when you cry out hard, and are in living earnest to know the right way, something will always come to tell you the right way; for it is a law of nature that every earnest call is answered, and an earnest demand or prayer for anything always brings the needed supply.

What is the aim of life?

To get the most happiness out of it; to so learn to live that every coming day will be looked for in the assurance that it will be as full, and even fuller, of pleasure than the day we now live in; to banish even the recollection that time can hang heavily on our hands; to be thankful that we live; to rise superior to sickness or pain; to command the body, through the power of the spirit, so that it can feel no pain; to control and command the thought so that it shall ever increase in power to work and act separate, apart, and afar from our body, so that it shall bring us all that we need of house or land or food or clothes, and that without robbing or doing injustice to anyone; to gain in power so that the spirit shall ever recuperate, reinvigorate, and rejuvenate the body so long as we desire to use it, so that no part or organ shall weaken, wither, or decay; to be learning ever new sources of amusement for ourselves and others; to make ourselves so full of happiness and use for others, that our presence may ever be welcome to them; to be no one's enemy and every one's friend,--that is the destiny of life in those domains of existence where people as real as we, and much more alive than we, have learned, and are ever learning, how to get the most of heaven out of life.

That is the inevitable destiny of every individual spirit.

You cannot escape ultimate happiness and permanent happiness as you grow on and on in this and other existences; and all the pains you suffer, or have suffered, are as prods and pokes to keep you out of wrong paths,--to make you follow the law.

And the more sensitive you grow, the more clearly will you see the law which leads away from all pain, and ever toward more happiness, and to a state of mind where it is such an ecstasy to live, that all sense of time is lost,--as the sense of time is lost with us when we are deeply interested or amused, or gaze upon a thrilling play or spectacle,--so that in the words of the biblical record, "a day shall be as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day."

The Nirvana of the Hindus suggests all the possibilities of life coming to our planet,--"Nirvana " implying that calmness, serenity, and confidence of mind which comes of the absolute certainty that every effort we make, every enterprise we undertake, must be successful; and that the happiness we realize this month is but the stepping-stone to the greater happiness of next.

If you felt that the trip of foreign travel you now long for and wish for was as certain to come as now you are certain that the sun rose this morning; if you knew that you would achieve your own peculiar and individual proficiency and triumph in painting or oratory, or as an actor or sculptor, or in any art, as surely as now you know you can walk downstairs, you would not of course feel any uneasiness. In all our relatively perfected lives we shall know this, because we shall know for an absolute certainty that when we concentrate our mental force or thought on any plan or pursuit or undertaking, we are setting at work the attractive force of thought- substance to draw to us the means or agencies or forces or individuals to carry out that plan, as certainly as the force of muscle applied to a line draws the ship to its pier.

You worry very little now as to your telegram reaching its destination, because, while you know next to nothing as to what electricity is, you do know that when it is applied in a certain way it will carry your message; and you will have the same confidence that when your thought is regulated and directed by a certain method, it will do for you what you wish. Before men knew how to use electricity there was as much of it as today, and with the same power as today; but so far as our convenience was concerned, it was quite useless as a message-bearer with a lack of knowledge to direct it.

The tremendous power of human thought is with us all today very much in a similar condition. It is wasted, because we do not know how to concentrate and direct it. It is worse than wasted, because, through ignorance and life-long habit, we work our mental batteries in the wrong direction, and send from us bolt after bolt of ill-will toward others, or enviousness or snarls or sneers or some form of ugliness,--all this being real element wrongly and ignorantly applied, which may strike and hurt others, and will certainly hurt us.

Here is the cornerstone of all successful effort in this existence or any other. Never in thought acknowledge an impossibility. Never in mind reject what to you may seem the wildest idea with scorn; because, in so doing, you may not know what you are closing the door against. To say anything is impossible because it seems impossible to you, is just so much training in the dangerous habit of calling out "Impossible!" to every new idea. Your mind is then a prison full of doors, barred to all outside, and you the only inmate. "All things" are possible with God. God works in and through you.

To say "Impossible!" as to what you may do or become is a sin. It is denying God's power to work through you. It is denying the power of the Infinite Spirit to do through you far more than what you are now capable of conceiving in mind. To say "Impossible!" is to set up your relatively weak limit of comprehension as the standard of the universe. It is as audacious as to attempt the measurement of endless space with a yard-stick.

When you say "Impossible!" and "I can't" you make a present impossibility for yourself. This thought of yours is the greatest hindrance to the possible. It cannot stop it. You will be pushed on, hang back as much as you may. There can be no successful resistance to the eternal and constant betterment of all things (including yourself).

You should say, "It is possible for me to become anything which I admire." You should say, "It is possible for me to become a writer, an orator, an actor, an artist." You have then thrown open the door to your own temple of art within you. So long as you said "Impossible!" you kept it closed. Your "I can't" was the iron bolt locking that door against you. Your "I can" is the power shoving back that bolt.

Christ's spirit or thought had power to command the elements, and quiet the storm. Your spirit as a part of the great whole has in the germ, and waiting for fruition, the same power. Christ, through power of concentrating the unseen element of his thought, could turn that unseen element into the seen, and materialize food,--loaves and fishes.

That is a power inherent in every spirit, and every spirit is growing to such power. You see today a healthy baby-boy. It cannot lift a pound; but you know there lies in that feeble child the powers and possibilities which, twenty years hence, may enable it to lift with ease two hundred pounds. So the greater power, the coming spiritual power, can be foretold for us, who are now relatively babes spiritually. The reason for life's being so unhappy here in this region of being is, that as we do not know the law, we go against it, and get thereby its pains instead of its pleasures.

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The law cannot be entirely learned by us out of past record or the past experience of anyone, no matter to what power they might have attained. Such records or lives may be very useful to us as suggesters. But while there are general principles that apply to all, there are also individual laws that apply to every separate and individualized person.

You cannot follow directly in my track in making yourself happier and better, nor can I in yours; because every one of us is made up of a different combination of element, as element has entered into and formed our spirits (our real selves) through the growth and evolution ages. You must study and find out for yourself what your nature requires to bring it permanent happiness. You are a book for yourself. You must open this book page after page, and chapter after chapter, as they come to you with the experience of each day, each month, each year, and read them.

No one else can read them for you as you can for yourself. No one else can think exactly as you think, or feel just as you feel, or be affected just as you are affected by other forces or persons about you; and for this reason no other person can judge what you really need to make your life more complete, more perfect, more happy so well as yourself.

You must find out for yourself what association is best for you, what food is best for you, and what method in any business, any art, any profession brings you the best results. You can be helped very much by conferring with others who are similarly interested. You can be very much helped by those who may have more knowledge than you of general laws.

You can be greatly helped to get force or courage or new ideas to carry out your undertakings, by meeting at regular intervals with earnest, sincere, and honest people who have also some definite purpose to accomplish, and talking yourself out to them, and they to you.

But when you accept any man or any woman as an infallible guide or authority, and do exactly as they say, you are off the main track; because then you are making the experiments of another person, formed of a certain combination of elements or chemicals, and the result of that person's experiments, the rule for your own individual combination of element, when your combination may be very different, and differently acted on by the elements outside of it.

You have iron and copper and magnesia and phosphorus, and more of other minerals and chemicals, and combination and re-combination of mineral and chemical, in your physical body than earthly science has yet thought of. You have in your spirit or thought the unseen or spiritual correspondences of these minerals still finer and more subtle; and all these are differently combined, and in different proportions, from any other physical or spiritual body. How, then, can anyone find out the peculiar action of this your individual combination, save yourself?

There are certain general laws; but every individual must apply the general law to him or herself. It is a general law that the wind will propel a ship. But every vessel does not use the air in exactly the same fashion. It is a general law that thought is force, and can effect, and is constantly effecting, results to others far from our bodies; and the quality of our thought and its power to affect results depends very much on our associations.

But for that reason, if yours is the superior thought or power, and I see that through its use you are moving ahead in the world, I should not choose your character of associates or your manner of life. I can try your methods as experiments; but I must remember they are only experiments. I must avoid that so common error,--the error of slavish copy and idolatry of another.

The Christ of Nazareth once bade certain of his followers not to worship him. "Call me not good," said he. "There is none good save God alone." Christ said, "I am the way and the life," meaning, as the text interprets itself to me, that as to certain general laws of which he was aware, and by which he also as a spirit was governed, he knew and could give certain information. But he never did assert that his individual life, with all the human infirmity or defect that he had "taken upon him," was to be strictly copied.

He did pray to the Infinite Spirit of Good for more strength, and deliverance from the SIN OF FEAR when his spirit quailed at the prospect of his crucifixion; and in so doing, he conceded that he, as a spirit (powerful as he was), needed help as much as any other spirit; and knowing this, he refused to pose himself before his followers as God, or the Infinite, but told them that when they desired to bow before that almighty and never-to-be-comprehended power, out of which comes every good at the prayer or demand of human mind, to worship God alone,-- God, the eternal and unfathomable moving power of boundless universe; the power that no man has ever seen or ever will see, save as he sees its varying expressions in sun, star, cloud, wind, bird, beast, flower, animal, or in man as the future angel or archangel, and ascending still to grades of mind and grades of power higher and higher still; but ever and ever looking to the source whence comes their power, and never, never worshipping any one form of such expression, and by so doing making the "creature greater than the Creator."

That power is today working on and in and through every man, woman, and child on this planet. Or, to use the biblical expression, it is, "God working in us and through us." We are all parts of the Infinite Power,--a power ever carrying us up to higher, finer, happier grades of being.

Every man or woman, no matter what may be their manner of life or grade of intellect, is a stronger and better man or woman than ever they were before, despite all seeming contradiction. The desire in human nature, and all forms of nature or of spirit expressed through matter, to be more and more refined is, up to a certain growth of mind, an unconscious desire. The god desire is at work on the lowest drunkard rolling in the gutter. That man's spirit wants to get out of the gutter. It is at work on the

greatest liar, prompting him, if ever so feebly, that the truth is better. It is at work on people you may call despicable and vile.

When Christ was asked how often a man should be forgiven any offence, he replied in a manner indicating that there should be no limit to the sum of one man or woman's forgiveness for the defects or immaturity in another. There should be no limit to the kind and helpful thought we think or put out toward another person who falls often, who is struggling with some unnatural appetite. It is a great evil, often done unconsciously, to say or think of an intemperate man, "Oh, he's gone to the dogs. It's no use doing anything more for him!" because, when we do this, we put hopeless, discouraging thought out in the air. It meets that person.

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He or she will feel it; and it is to them an element retarding their progress out of the slough they are in, just as some person's similar thought has retarded us in our effort to get out of some slough we were in or are in now,--slough of indecision; slough of despondency; slough of ill-temper; slough of envious, hating thought.

Yet the spirit of man becomes the stronger for all it struggles against. It becomes the stronger for struggling against your censorious, uncharitable thought, until at last it carries a man or woman to a point where they may in thought say to others, "I would rather have your approbation than your censure. But I am not dependent on your approbation or censure, for my most rigid judge and surest punishment for all the evil I do comes of my own mind,--the god or goddess in myself from whose judgment, from whose displeasure, there is no escaping."

Yet as the spirit grows clearer and clearer in sight, so does that judge in ourselves become more and more merciful for its own errors; for it knows that, in a sense, as we refine from cruder to finer expression, there must be just so much evil to be contended against, fought against, and finally and inevitably overcome. Every man and woman is predestined to a certain amount of defect, until the spirit overcomes such defect; and overcome it must, for it is the nature of spirit to struggle against defect. It is the one thing impossible for man to take this quality out of his own spirit--the quality of ever rising toward more power and happiness.

If you make this an excuse to sin, or commit excess, or lie or steal or murder, and say, "I can't help it; I'm predestined to it," you will be punished all the same, not possibly by man's law, but by natural or divine law which has its own punishments for every possible sin,--for murder or lust or lying or stealing or evil thinking or gluttony; and these punishments are being constantly inflicted, and today thousands on thousands are suffering for the sins they commit in ignorance of the law of life; and the pain of such punishment has grown so great, and bears so heavily on so many, that there is now a greater desire than ever to know more of these laws; and for that very reason is this desire being met, and these questions are being answered; for it is an inevitable law of nature that what the human mind demands, that it, in time, gets; and the greater the number of minds so demanding, the sooner is the demand met, and the questions answered.

Steam but a few years ago relatively met the demand of human mind for greater speed in travel. Electricity met a demand for greater speed in sending intelligence from man to man. These are but as straws pointing to the discovery and use of greater powers, not only in elements outside of man, but in the unseen elements which make man and woman; in the elements unseen which make you and me.

Henceforth our race will commence to be lifted out of evil or cruder forms of expression, not by fear of the punishments coming through violation of the law, but they will be led to the wiser course through love of the delight which comes of following the law as we discover it for ourselves.

You eat moderately, because experience has taught that the greater pleasure comes of moderation. You are gentle, kind, and considerate to your friend, not that you have constantly before your mind the fear of losing that friend if you are not kind and considerate, but because it pleases you, and you love the doing of kind acts. Human law, and even divine law as interpreted by human understanding, have ever been saying in the past, "You must not do this or that, or you'll feel the rod."

God has been pictured as a stern, merciless, avenging deity. The burden of the preacher's song has been Penalty and Punishment! Punishment and Penalty! Humanity is to forget all about penalty and punishment, because it is to be won over, and tempted to greater goodness, to purity and refinement by the ever-increasing pleasures brought us as we refine.

The warning of penalty was necessary when humanity was cruder. It could only be reached by the rod. The race was blind, and as a necessity of its condition it had to be kept somewhere near the right path by a succession of painful prods and pokes with the sharp goad of penalty. But when we begin to see clearer, as now the more quickened and sensitive of our race do begin to see, we need no rod, any more than you need a man with a club to prevail on you to go to a feast.