

As A Man Thinketh

JAMES ALLEN



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Foreword

1 This little volume (the result of meditation and experience) is not
2 intended as an exhaustive treatise on the much-written upon subject
3 of the power of thought. It is suggestive rather than explanatory, its
4 object being to stimulate men and women to the discovery and
5 perception of the truth that...

6 *They themselves are makers of themselves*

7 by virtue of the thoughts which they choose and encourage; that mind
8 is the master-weaver, both of the inner garment of character and the
9 outer garment of circumstance, and that, as they may have hitherto
10 woven in ignorance and pain they may now weave in enlightenment
11 and happiness.

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Chapter 1

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Thought and Character

1 The aphorism, "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he" not only
2 embraces the whole of a man's being, but is so comprehensive as to
3 reach out to every condition and circumstance of his life. A man is
4 literally *what he thinks*, his character being the complete sum of all
5 his thoughts.

6

7 As the plant springs from, and could not be without, the seed, so
8 every act of a man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and
9 could not have appeared without them. This applies equally to those
10 acts called "spontaneous" and "unpremeditated" as to those which
11 are deliberately executed.

12

13 Act is the blossom of thought, and joy and suffering are its fruits; thus
14 does a man garner in the sweet and bitter fruitage of his own
15 husbandry.

16

35 the tools with which he builds for himself heavenly mansions of joy
36 and strength and peace. By the right choice and true application of
37 thought, man ascends to the Divine Perfection; by the abuse and
38 wrong application of thought, he descends below the level of the
39 beast. Between these two extremes are all the grades of character,
40 and man is their maker and master.

41

42 Of all the beautiful truths pertaining to the soul which have been
43 restored and brought to light in this age, none is more gladdening or
44 fruitful of divine promise and confidence than this - that man is the
45 master of thought, the molder of character, and maker and shaper of
46 condition, environment, and destiny.

47

48 As a being of Power, Intelligence, and Love, and the Lord of his own
49 thoughts, man holds the key to every situation, and contains within
50 himself that transforming and regenerative agency by which he may
51 make himself what he wills.

52

53 Man is always the master, even in his weakest and most abandoned
54 state; but in his weakness and degradation he is the foolish master
55 who misgoverns his household. When he begins to reflect upon his
56 condition, and to search diligently for the Law upon which his being is
57 established, he then becomes the wise master, directing his energies
58 with intelligence, and fashioning his thoughts to fruitful issues. Such is
59 the conscious master, and man can only thus become by discovering
60 within himself the laws of thought; which discovery is totally a matter
61 of application, self-analysis, and experience.

62

63 Only by much searching and mining are gold and diamonds obtained,
64 and man can find every truth connected with his being if he will dig
65 deep into the mine of his soul; and that he is the maker of his
66 character, the molder of his life, and the builder of his destiny, he may
67
68 unerringly prove, if he will watch, control, and alter his thoughts,
69 tracing their effects upon himself, upon others, and upon his life and
70 circumstances, linking cause and effect by patient practice and



71 investigation, and utilizing his every experience, even to the most
72 trivial, everyday occurrence, as a means of obtaining that knowledge
73 of himself which is Understanding, Wisdom, Power. In this direction,
74 as in no other, is the law absolute that "He that seeketh findeth; and
75 to him that knocketh it shall be opened"; for only by patience,
76 practice, and ceaseless importunity can a man enter the Door of the
77 Temple of Knowledge.

Effect of Thought on Circumstance

1 A man's mind may be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently
2 cultivated or allowed to run wild; but whether cultivated or neglected,
3 it must, and will, bring forth. If no useful seeds are put into it, then an
4 abundance of useless weed seeds will fall therein, and will continue
5 to produce their kind.

6

7 Just as a gardener cultivates his plot, keeping it free from weeds, and
8 growing the flowers and fruits which he requires, so may a man tend
9 the garden of his mind, weeding out all the wrong, useless, and
10 impure thoughts, and cultivating toward perfection the flowers and
11 fruits of right, useful, and pure thoughts. By pursuing this process, a
12 man sooner or later discovers that he is the master-gardener of his
13 soul, the director of his life. He also reveals, within himself, the laws
14 of thought, and understands, with ever-increasing accuracy, how the
15 thought-forces and mind-elements operate in the shaping of his

16 character, circumstances, and destiny.

17

18 Thought and character are one, and as character can only manifest

19 and discover itself through environment and circumstance, the outer

20 conditions of a person's life will always be found to be harmoniously

21 related to his inner state. This does not mean that a man's

22 circumstances at any given time are an indication of his entire

23 character, but that those circumstances are so intimately connected

24 with some vital thought-element within himself that, for the time being,

25 they are indispensable to his development.

26

27 Every man is where he is by the law of his being; the thoughts which

28 he has built into his character have brought him there, and in the

29 arrangement of his life there is no element of chance, but all is the

30 result of a law which cannot err. This is just as true of those who feel

31 "out of harmony" with their surroundings as of those who are

32 contented with them.

33

34 As the progressive and evolving being, man is where he is that he
35 may learn that he may grow; and as he learns the spiritual lesson
36 which any circumstance contains for him, it passes away and gives
37 place to other circumstances.

38

39 Man is buffeted by circumstances so long as he believes himself to
40 be the creature of outside conditions, but when he realizes that he is
41 a creative power, and that he may command the hidden soil and
42 seeds of his being out of which circumstances grow, he then
43 becomes the rightful master of himself.

44

45 That circumstances grow out of thought every man knows who has
46 for any length of time practiced self-control and self-purification, for
47 he will have noticed that the alteration in his circumstances has been
48 in exact ratio with his altered mental condition. So true is this that
49 when a man earnestly applies himself to remedy the defects in his
50 character, and makes swift and marked progress, he passes rapidly
51 through a succession of vicissitudes.

52

53 The soul attracts that which it secretly harbors; that which it loves,
54 and also that which it fears; it reaches the height of its cherished
55 aspirations; it falls to the level of its unchastened
56 desires; and circumstances are the means by which the soul receives
57 its own.

58

59 Every thought-seed sown or allowed to fall into the mind, and to take
60 root there, produces its own, blossoming sooner or later into act, and
61 bearing its own fruitage of opportunity and circumstances. Good
62 thoughts bear good fruit, bad thoughts bad fruit.

63

64 The outer world of circumstance shapes itself to the inner world of
65 thought, and both pleasant and unpleasant external conditions are
66 factors which make for the ultimate good of the individual. As the
67 reaper of his own harvest, man learns both by suffering and bliss.

68

69 Following the inmost desires, aspirations, thoughts, by which he

70 allows himself to be dominated (pursuing the will-o'-the-wisp of
71 impure imagining or steadfastly walking the highway of strong and
72 high endeavor), a man at last arrives at their fruition and fulfillment in
73 the outer condition of his life. The laws of growth and adjustment
74 everywhere obtain.

75

76 A man does not come to the almshouse or the jail by the tyranny of
77 fate or circumstance, but by the pathway of groveling thoughts and
78 base desires. Nor does a pure-minded man fall suddenly into crime
79 by stress of any mere external force; the criminal thought had long
80 been secretly fostered in the heart, and the hour of opportunity
81 revealed its gathered power. Circumstance does not make the man; it
82 reveals him to himself. No such conditions can exist as descending
83 into vice and its attendant sufferings apart from vicious inclinations; or
84 ascending into virtue and its pure happiness without the continued
85 cultivation of virtuous aspirations; and man, therefore, as the lord and
86 master of thought, is the maker of himself, the shaper and author of
87 environment. Even at birth the soul comes to its own, and through

88 every step of its earthly pilgrimage it attracts those combinations of
89 conditions which reveal itself, which are the reflections of its own
90 purity and impurity, its strength and weakness.

91

92 Men do not attract that which they want, but that which they are. Their
93 whims, fancies, and ambitions are thwarted at every step, but their
94 inmost thoughts and desires are fed with their own food, be it foul or
95 clean. The "divinity that shapes our ends" is in ourselves; it is our
96 very Self. Man is manacled only by himself. Thought and action are
97 the jailers of Fate - they imprison, being base; they are also the
98 angels of Freedom - they liberate, being noble. Not what he wishes
99 and prays for does a man get, but what he justly earns. His wishes
100 and prayers are only gratified and answered when they harmonize
101 with his thoughts and actions.

102

103 In the light of this truth, what, then, is the meaning of "fighting against
104 circumstances"? It means that a man is continually revolting against
105 an effect without, while all the time he is nourishing and preserving its

106 cause in his heart. That cause may take the form of a conscious vice
107 or an unconscious weakness; but whatever it is, it stubbornly retards
108 the efforts of its possessor, and thus calls aloud for remedy.

109

110 Men are anxious to improve their circumstances, but are unwilling to
111 improve themselves; they therefore remain bound. The man who
112 does not shrink from self-crucifixion can never fail to accomplish the
113 object upon which his heart is set. This is as true of earthly as of
114 heavenly things. Even the man whose sole object is to acquire wealth
115 must be prepared to make great personal sacrifices before he can
116 accomplish his object; and how much more so he who would realize
117 a strong and well-poised life?

118

119 Here is a man who is wretchedly poor. He is extremely anxious that
120 his surroundings and home comforts should be improved, yet all the
121 time he shirks his work, and considers he is justified in trying to
122 deceive his employer on the ground of the insufficiency of his wages.
123 Such a man does not understand the simplest rudiments of those

124 principles which are the basis of true prosperity, and is not only totally
125 unfitted to rise out of his wretchedness, but is actually attracting to
126 himself a still deeper wretchedness by dwelling in, and acting out,
127 indolent, deceptive, and unmanly thoughts.

128

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

135

136 Here is an employer of labor who adopts crooked measures to avoid
137 paying the regulation wage, and, in the hope of making larger profits,
138 reduces the wages of his work-people. Such a man is altogether
139 unfitted for prosperity, and when he finds himself bankrupt, both as
140 regards reputation and riches, he blames circumstances, not knowing
141 that he is the sole author of his condition.

142

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

144 that man is the cause (though nearly always unconsciously) of his

145 circumstances, and that, whilst aiming at a good end, he is

146 continually frustrating its accomplishment by encouraging thoughts

147 and desires which cannot possibly harmonize with that end. Such

148 cases could be multiplied and varied almost indefinitely, but this is not

149 necessary, as the reader can, if he so resolves, trace the action of the

150 laws of thought in his own mind and life, and until this is done, mere

151 external facts cannot serve as a ground of reasoning.

152

153 Circumstances, however, are so complicated, thought is so deeply

154 rooted, and the conditions of happiness vary so vastly with

155 individuals, that a man's entire soul condition (although it may be

156 known to himself) cannot be judged by another from the external

157 aspect of his life alone. A man may be honest in certain directions,

158 yet suffer privations; a man may be dishonest in certain directions,

159 yet acquire wealth; but the conclusion usually formed that the one
160 man fails because of his particular honesty, and that the other
161 prospers because of his particular dishonesty, is the result of a
162 superficial judgment, which assumes that the dishonest man is
163 almost totally corrupt, and honest man almost entirely virtuous. In the
164 light of a deeper knowledge and wider experience, such judgment is
165 found to be erroneous. The dishonest man may have some admirable
166 virtues which the other does not possess; and the honest man
167 obnoxious vices which are absent in the other. The honest man reaps
168 the good results of his honest thoughts and acts; he also brings upon
169 himself the sufferings which his vices produce. The dishonest man
170 likewise garners his own suffering and happiness.

171

172 It is pleasing to human vanity to believe that one suffers because of
173 one's virtue; but not until a man has extirpated every sickly, bitter, and
174 impure thought from his mind, and washed every sinful stain from his
175 soul, can he be in a position to know and declare that his sufferings
176 are the result of his good, and not of his bad qualities; and on the way

177 to that supreme perfection, he will have found working in his mind
178 and life, the Great Law which is absolutely just, and which cannot
179 give good for evil, evil for good. Possessed of such knowledge, he
180 will then know, looking back upon his past ignorance and blindness,
181 that his life is, and always was, justly ordered, and that all his past
182 experiences, good and bad, were the equitable outworking of his
183 evolving, yet unevolved self.

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

191

192 Suffering is always the effect of wrong thought in some direction. It is
193 an indication that the individual is out of harmony with himself, with

194 the Law of his being. The sole and supreme use of suffering is to
195 purify, to burn out all that is useless and impure. Suffering ceases for
196 him who is pure. There could be not object in burning gold after the
197 dross had been removed, and a perfectly pure and enlightened being
198 could not suffer.

199

200 The circumstances which a man encounters with suffering are the
201 result of his own mental inharmony. The circumstances which a man
202 encounters with blessedness are the result of his own mental
203 harmony. Blessedness, not material possessions, is the measure of
204 right thought; wretchedness, not lack of material possessions, is the
205 measure of wrong thought. A man may be cursed and rich; he may
206 be blessed and poor. Blessedness and riches are only joined
together

207 when the riches are rightly and wisely used; and the poor man only
208 descends into wretchedness when he regards his lot as a burden
209 unjustly imposed.

210

211 Indigence and indulgence are the two extremes of wretchedness.

212 They are both equally unnatural and the result of mental disorder. A

213 man is not rightly conditioned until he is a happy, healthy, and

214 prosperous being; and happiness, health, and prosperity are the

215 result of a harmonious adjustment of the inner with the outer, of the

216 man with his surroundings.

217

218 A man only begins to be a man when he ceases to whine and revile,

219 and commences to search for the hidden justice which regulates his

220 life. And as he adapts his mind to that regulating factor, he ceases to

221 accuse others as the cause of his condition, and builds himself up in

222 strong and noble thoughts; ceases to kick against circumstances, but

223 begins to use them as aids to his more rapid progress, and as a

224 means of discovering the hidden powers and possibilities within

225 himself.

226

227 Law, not confusion, is the dominating principle in the universe;
justice,

228 not injustice, is the soul and substance of life; and righteousness, not
229 corruption, is the molding and moving force in the spiritual
230 government of the world. This being so, man has but to right himself
231 to find that the universe is right, and during the process of putting
232 himself right, he will find that as he alters his thoughts toward things
233 and other people, things and other people will alter toward him.

234 The proof of this truth is in every person, and it therefore admits of
235 easy investigation by systematic introspection and self-analysis. Let a
236 man radically alter his thoughts, and he will be astonished at the rapid
237 transformation it will effect in the material conditions of his life. Men
238 imagine that thought can be kept secret, but it cannot; it rapidly
239 crystallizes into habit, and habit solidifies into circumstance. Bestial
240 thoughts crystallize into habits of drunkenness and sensuality, which
241 solidify into circumstances of destruction and disease: impure
242 thoughts of every kind crystallize into enervating and confusing
243 habits, which solidify into distracting and adverse circumstances:
244 thoughts of fear, doubt, and indecision crystallize into weak, unmanly,

245 and irresolute habits, which solidify into circumstances of failure,
246 indigence, and slavish dependence: lazy thoughts crystallize into
247 habits of uncleanness and dishonesty, which solidify into
248 circumstances of foulness and beggary: hateful and condemnatory
249 thoughts crystallize into habits of accusation and violence, which
250 solidify into circumstances of injury and persecution: selfish thoughts
251 of all kinds crystallize into habits of self-seeking, which solidify into
252 circumstances more or less distressing. On the other hand, beautiful
253 thoughts of all kinds crystallize into habits of grace and kindness,
254 which solidify into genial and sunny circumstances: pure thoughts
255 crystallize into habits of temperance and self-control, which solidify
256 into circumstances of repose and peace: thoughts of courage,
257 self-reliance, and decision crystallize into manly habits, which solidify
258 into circumstances of success, plenty, and freedom: energetic
259 thoughts crystallize into habits of cleanliness and industry, which
260 solidify into circumstances of pleasantness: gentle and forgiving
261 thoughts crystallize into habits of gentleness, which solidify into
262 protective and preservative circumstances: loving and unselfish

263 thoughts crystallize into habits of self-forgetfulness for others, which
264 solidify into circumstances of sure and abiding prosperity and true
265 riches.

266

267 A particular train of thought persisted in, be it good or bad, cannot fail
268 to produce its results on the character and circumstances. A man
269 cannot directly choose his circumstances, but he can choose his
270 thoughts, and so indirectly, yet surely, shape his circumstances.

271 Nature helps every man to the gratification of the thoughts which he
272 most encourages, and opportunities are presented which will most
273 speedily bring to the surface both the good and evil thoughts.

274

275 Let a man cease from his sinful thoughts, and all the world will soften
276 toward him, and be ready to help him; let him put away his weakly
277 and sickly thoughts, and lo! opportunities will spring up on every hand
278 to aid his strong resolves; let him encourage good thoughts, and no
279 hard fate shall bind him down to wretchedness and shame. The world
280 is your kaleidoscope, and the varying combinations of colors which at

281 every succeeding moment it presents to you are the exquisitely

282 adjusted pictures of your ever-moving thoughts.

283

284 You will be what you will to be;

285 Let failure find its false content

286 In that poor word, "environment,"

287 But spirit scorns it, and is free.

288 It masters time, it conquers space;

289 It crows that boastful trickster, Chance,

290 And bids the tyrant Circumstance

291 Uncrown, and fill a servant's place.

292 The human Will, that force unseen,

293 The offspring of a deathless Soul,

294 Can hew a way to any goal,

295 Though walls of granite intervene.

296 Be not impatient in delay,

297 But wait as one who understands;

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298

When spirit rises and commands,

299

The gods are ready to obey.

Effect of Thought on Health and the Body

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

6

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

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

19

20 Men will continue to have impure and poisoned blood so long as they
21 propagate unclean thoughts. Out of a clean heart comes a clean life
22 and a clean body. Out of a defiled mind proceeds a defiled life and
23 corrupt body. Thought is the fount of action, life and manifestation;
24 make the fountain pure, and all will be pure.

25

26 Change of diet will not help a man who will not change his thoughts.
27 When a man makes his thoughts pure, he no longer desires impure
28 food.

29

30 Clean thoughts make clean habits. The so called saint who does not
31 wash his body is not a saint. He who has strengthened and purified
32 his thoughts does not need to consider the malevolent microbe.

33

34 If you would perfect your body, guard your mind. If you would renew
35 your body, beautify your mind. Thoughts of malice, envy,
36 disappointment, despondency, rob the body of its health and grace. A
37 sour face does not come by chance; it is made by sour thoughts.
38 Wrinkles that mar are drawn by folly, passion, pride.

39

40 I know a woman of ninety-six who has the bright, innocent face of a
41 girl. I know a man well under middle age whose face is drawn into
42 inharmonious contours. The one is the result of a sweet and sunny
43 disposition; the other is the outcome of passion and discontent.

44

45 As you cannot have a sweet and wholesome abode unless you admit
46 the air and sunshine freely into your rooms, so a strong body and a
47 bright, happy, or serene countenance can only result from the free
48 admittance into the mind of thoughts of joy and good will and
serenity.

49

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

57

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

Thought and Purpose

1 Until thought is linked with purpose there is no intelligent
2 accomplishment. With the majority the barque of thought is allowed to
3 drift upon the ocean of life. Aimlessness is a vice, and such drifting
4 must not continue for him who would steer clear of catastrophe and
5 destruction.

6

7 They who have no central purpose in their life fall an easy prey to
8 petty worries, fears, troubles, and self-pitying, all of which lead, just
9 as surely as deliberately planned sins (though by a different route), to
10 failure, unhappiness, and loss, for weakness cannot persist in a
11 power-evolving universe.

12

13 A man should conceive of a legitimate purpose in his heart, and set
14 out to accomplish it. He should make this purpose the centralizing
15 point of his thoughts. It may take the form of a spiritual ideal, or it may

16 be a worldly object, according to his nature at the time being; but
17 whichever it is, he should steadily focus his thought forces upon the
18 object which he has set before him. He should make this purpose his
19 supreme duty, and should devote himself to its attainment, not
20 allowing his thoughts to wander away into ephemeral fancies,
21 longings, and imaginings. This is the royal road to self-control and
22 true concentration of thought. Even if he fails again and again to
23 accomplish his purpose (as he necessarily must until weakness is
24 overcome), the strength of character gained will be the measure of
25 his true success, and this will form a new starting point for future
26 `power and triumph.

27

28 Those who are not prepared for the apprehension of a great purpose,
29 should fix their thoughts upon the faultless performance of their duty,
30 no matter how insignificant their task may appear. Only in this way
31 can the thoughts be gathered and focused, and resolution and energy
32 be developed, which being done, there is nothing which may not be
33 accomplished.

34

35 The weakest soul, knowing its own weakness, and believing this truth
36 - that strength can only be developed by effort and practice, will at
37 once begin to exert itself, and adding effort to effort, patience to
38 patience, and strength to strength, will never cease to develop, and
39 will at last grow divinely strong.

40

41 As the physically weak man can make himself strong by careful and
42 patient training, so the man of weak thoughts can make them strong
43 by exercising himself in right thinking.

44

45 To put away aimlessness and weakness, and to begin to think with
46 purpose, is to enter the ranks of those strong ones who only
47 recognize failure as one of the pathways to attainment; who make all
48 conditions serve them, and who think strongly, attempt fearlessly, and
49 accomplish masterfully.

50

51 Having conceived of his purpose, a man should mentally mark out a

52 straight pathway to its achievement, looking neither to the right nor to
53 the left. Doubts and fears should be rigorously excluded; they are
54 disintegrating elements which break up the straight line of effort,
55 rendering it crooked, ineffectual, useless.

56

57 Thoughts of doubt and fear never accomplish anything, and never
58 can. They always lead to failure. Purpose, energy, power to do, and
59 all strong thoughts cease when doubt and fear creep in.

60

61 The will to do springs from the knowledge that we can do. Doubt and
62 fear are the great enemies of knowledge, and he who encourages
63 them, who does not slay them, thwarts himself at every step.

64

65 He who has conquered doubt and fear has conquered failure. His
66 every thought is allied with power, and all difficulties are bravely met
67 and wisely overcome. His purposes are seasonably planted, and they
68 bloom and bring forth fruit which does not fall prematurely to the
69 ground.

70

71 Thought allied fearlessly to purpose becomes creative force; he who

72 knows this is ready to become something higher and stronger than a

73 mere bundle of wavering thoughts and fluctuating sensations; he who

74 does this has become the conscious and intelligent wielder of his

75 mental powers.

The Thought Factor in Achievement

1 All that a man achieves and all that he fails to achieve is the direct
2 result of his own thoughts. In a justly ordered universe, where loss of
3 equipoise would mean total destruction, individual responsibility must
4 be absolute. A man's weakness and strength, purity and impurity, are
5 his own, and not another man's; they are brought about by himself,
6 and not by another; and they can only be altered by himself, never by
7 another. His condition is also his own, and not another man's. His
8 sufferings and his happiness are evolved from within. As he thinks, so
9 he is; as he continues to think, so he remains.

10

11 A strong man cannot help a weaker unless the weaker is willing to be
12 helped, and even then the weak man must become strong of himself;
13 he must, by his own efforts, develop the strength which he admires in
14 another. None but himself can alter his condition.

15 It has been usual for men to think and to say, "Many men are slaves
16 because one is an oppressor; let us hate the oppressor." Now,
17 however, there is among an increasing few a tendency to reverse this
18 judgment, and to say, "One man is an oppressor because many are
19 slaves; let us despise the slaves." The truth is that oppressor and
20 slave are co-operators in ignorance, and, while seeming to afflict
21 each other, are in reality afflicting themselves. A perfect Knowledge
22 perceives the action of law in the weakness of the oppressed and the
23 misapplied power of the oppressor; a perfect Love, seeing the
24 suffering which both states entail, condemns neither; a perfect
25 Compassion embraces both oppressor and oppressed.

26

27 He who has conquered weakness, and has put away all selfish
28 thoughts, belongs neither to oppressor nor oppressed. He is free.

29

30 A man can only rise, conquer, and achieve by lifting up his thoughts.

31 He can only remain weak, and abject, and miserable by refusing to lift
32 up his thoughts.

33

34 Before a man can achieve anything, even in worldly things, he must
35 lift his thoughts above slavish animal indulgence. He may not, in
36 order to succeed, give up all animality and selfishness, by any
37 means; but a portion of it must, at least, be sacrificed. A man whose
38 first thought is bestial indulgence could neither think clearly nor plan
39 methodically; he could not find and develop his latent resources, and
40 would fail in any undertaking. Not having commenced manfully to
41 control his thoughts, he is not in a position to control affairs and to
42 adopt serious responsibilities. He is not fit to act independently and
43 stand alone. But he is limited only by the thoughts which he chooses.

44

45 There can be no progress, no achievement without sacrifice, and a
46 man's worldly success will be in the measure that he sacrifices his
47 confused animal thoughts, and fixes his mind on the development of
48 his plans, and the strengthening of his resolution and self reliance.
49 And the higher he lifts his thoughts, the more manly, upright, and
50 righteous he becomes, the greater will be his success, the more

51 blessed and enduring will be his achievements.

52

53 The universe does not favor the greedy, the dishonest, the vicious,

54 although on the mere surface it may sometimes appear to do so; it

55 helps the honest, the magnanimous, the virtuous. All the great

56 Teachers of the ages have declared this in varying forms, and to

57 prove and know it a man has but to persist in making himself more

58 and more virtuous by lifting up his thoughts.

59

60 Intellectual achievements are the result of thought consecrated to the

61 search for knowledge, or for the beautiful and true in life and nature.

62 Such achievements may be sometimes connected with vanity and

63 ambition but they are not the outcome of those characteristics; they

64 are the natural outgrowth of long and arduous effort, and of pure and

65 unselfish thoughts.

66

67 Spiritual achievements are the consummation of holy aspirations. He

68 who lives constantly in the conception of noble and lofty thoughts,

69 who dwells upon all that is pure and unselfish, will, as surely as the
70 sun reaches its zenith and the moon its full, become wise and noble
71 in character, and rise into a position of influence and blessedness.

72

73 Achievement, of whatever kind, is the crown of effort, the diadem of
74 thought. By the aid of self-control, resolution, purity, righteousness,
75 and well-directed thought, a man ascends; by the aid of animality,
76 indolence, impurity, corruption, and confusion of thought a man
77 descends. A man may rise to high success in the world, and even to
78 lofty altitudes in the spiritual realm, and again descend into weakness
79 and wretchedness by allowing arrogant, selfish, and corrupt thoughts
80 to take possession of him.

81

82 Victories attained by right thought can only be maintained by
83 watchfulness. Many give way when success is assured, and rapidly
84 fall back into failure.

85

86 All achievements, whether in the business, intellectual, or spiritual



87 world, are the result of definitely directed thought, are governed by
88 the same law and are of the same method; the only difference lies in
89 the *object of attainment*.

90

91 He who would accomplish little must sacrifice little; he who would
92 achieve much must sacrifice much; he who would attain highly must
93 sacrifice greatly.

Vision and Ideals

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

7

8 Composer, sculptor, painter, poet, prophet, sage, these are the
9 makers of the after-world, the architects of heaven. The world is
10 beautiful because they have lived; without them, laboring humanity
11 would perish.

12

13 He who cherishes a beautiful vision, a lofty ideal in his heart, will one
14 day realize it. Columbus cherished a vision of another world, and he
15 discovered it; Copernicus fostered the vision of a multiplicity of worlds

16 and a wider universe, and he revealed it; Buddha beheld the vision of
17 a spiritual world of stainless beauty and perfect peace, and he
18 entered into it.

19

20 Cherish your visions; cherish your ideals; cherish the music that stirs
21 in your heart, the beauty that forms in your mind, the loveliness that
22 drapes your purest thoughts, for out of them will grow all delightful
23 conditions, all heavenly environment; of these, if you but remain true
24 to them, your world will at last be built.

25

26 To desire is to obtain; to aspire is to achieve. Shall man's basest
27 desires receive the fullest measure of gratification, and his purest
28 aspirations starve for lack of sustenance? Such is not the Law: such
29 a condition of things can never obtain : "Ask and receive."

30 Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so shall you become. Your
31 Vision is the promise of what you shall one day be; your Ideal is the
32 prophecy of what you shall at last unveil.

33

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

38

39 Your circumstances may be uncongenial, but they shall not long
40 remain so if you but perceive an Ideal and strive to reach it. You
41 cannot travel within and stand still without. Here is a youth hard
42 pressed by poverty and labor; confined long hours in an unhealthy
43 workshop; unschooled, and lacking all the arts of refinement. But he
44 dreams of better things; he thinks of intelligence, of refinement, of
45 grace and beauty. He conceives of, mentally builds up, an ideal
46 condition of life; the vision of a wider liberty and a larger scope takes
47 possession of him; unrest urges him to action, and he utilizes all his
48 spare time and means, small though they are, to the development of
49 his latent powers and resources. Very soon so altered has his mind
50 become that the workshop can no longer hold him. It has become so

51 out of harmony with his mentality that it falls out of his life as a
52 garment is cast aside, and, with the growth of opportunities which fit
53 the scope of his expanding powers, he passes out of it forever. Years
54 later we see this youth as a full-grown man. We find him a master of
55 certain forces of the mind which he wields with world-wide influence
56 and almost unequaled power. In his hands he holds the cords of
57 gigantic responsibilities; he speaks, and lo! lives are changed; men
58 and women hang upon his words and remold their characters, and,
59 sunlike, he becomes the fixed and luminous center around which
60 innumerable destinies revolve. He has realized the Vision of his
61 youth. He has become one with his Ideal.

62

63 And you, too, youthful reader, will realize the Vision (not the idle wish)
64 of your heart, be it base or beautiful, or a mixture of both, for you will
65 always gravitate toward that which you secretly most love. Into your
66 hands will be placed the exact results of your own thoughts; you will
67 receive that which you earn; no more, no less. Whatever your present
68 environment may be, you will fall, remain, or rise with your thoughts,

69 your Vision, your Ideal. You will become as small as your controlling
70 desire; as great as your dominant aspiration: in the beautiful words of
71 Stanton Kirkham Davis, "You may be keeping accounts, and
72 presently you shall walk out of the door that for so long has seemed
73 to you the barrier of your ideals, and shall find yourself before an
74 audience - the pen still behind your ear, the ink stains on your fingers
75 - and then and there shall pour out the torrent of your inspiration. You
76 may be driving sheep, and you shall wander to the city - bucolic and
77 open mouthed; shall wander under the intrepid guidance of the spirit
78 into the studio of the master, and after a time he shall say, 'I have
79 nothing more to teach you.' And now you have become the master,
80 who did so recently dream of great things while driving sheep. You
81 shall lay down the saw and the plane to take upon yourself the
82 regeneration of the world." The thoughtless, the ignorant, and the
83 indolent, seeing only the apparent effects of things and not the things
84 themselves, talk of luck, of fortune, and chance. Seeing a man grow
85 rich, they say, "How lucky he is!" Observing another become
86 intellectual, they exclaim, "How highly favored he is!" And noting the

87 saintly character and wide influence of another, the remark, "How
88 chance aids him at every turn!" They do not see the trials and failures
89 and struggles which these men have voluntarily encountered in order
90 to gain their experience; have no knowledge of the sacrifices they
91 have made, of the undaunted efforts they have put forth, of the faith
92 they have exercised, that they might overcome the apparently
93 insurmountable, and realize the Vision of their heart. They do not
94 know the darkness and the heartaches; they only see the light and
95 joy, and call it "luck"; do not see the long and arduous journey, but
96 only behold the pleasant goal, and call it "good fortune"; do not
97 understand the process, but only perceive the result, and call it
98 "chance." In all human affairs there are efforts, and there are results,
99 and the strength of the effort is the measure of the result. Chance is
100 not. "Gifts," powers, material, intellectual, and spiritual possessions
101 are the fruits of effort; they are thoughts completed, objects
102 accomplished, visions realized.
103
104 The Vision that you glorify in your mind, the Ideal that you enthrone in



105 your heart - this you will build your life by, this you will become.

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Chapter 7

Serenity

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

5

6 A man becomes calm in the measure that he understands himself as
7 a thought-evolved being, for such knowledge necessitates the
8 understanding of others as the result of thought, and as he develops
9 a right understanding, and sees more and more clearly the internal
10 relations of things by the action of cause and effect, he ceases to fuss
11 and fume and worry and grieve, and remains poised, steadfast,
12 serene.

13

14 The calm man, having learned how to govern himself, knows how to
15 adapt himself to others; and they, in turn, reverence his spiritual

16 strength, and feel that they can learn of him and rely upon him. The
17 more tranquil a man becomes, the greater is his success, his
18 influence, his power for good. Even the ordinary trader will find his
19 business prosperity increase as he develops a greater self-control
20 and equanimity, for people will always prefer to deal with a man
21 whose demeanor is strongly equable.

22

23 The strong, calm man is always loved and revered. He is like a
24 shade-giving tree in a thirsty land, or a sheltering rock in a storm.
25 Who does not love a tranquil heart, a sweet-tempered, balanced life?
26 It does not matter whether it rains or shines, or what changes come
27 to those possessing these blessings, for they are always sweet,
28 serene, and calm. That exquisite poise of character which we call
29 serenity is the last lesson of culture; it is the flowering of life, the
30 fruitage of the soul. It is precious as wisdom, more to be desired than
31 gold - yea, than even fine gold. How insignificant mere
32 money-seeking looks in comparison with a serene life - a life that
33 dwells in the ocean of Truth, beneath the waves, beyond the reach of

34 tempests, in the Eternal Calm!

35

36 How many people we know who sour their lives, who ruin all that is

37 sweet and beautiful by explosive tempers, who destroy their poise of

38 character, and make bad blood! It is a question whether the great

39 majority of people do not ruin their lives and mar their happiness by

40 lack of self-control. How few people we meet in life who are

41 well-balanced, who have that exquisite poise which is characteristic

42 of the finished character!

43

44 Yes, humanity surges with uncontrolled passion, is tumultuous with

45 ungoverned grief, is blown about by anxiety and doubt. Only the wise

46 man, only he whose thoughts are controlled and purified, makes the

47 winds and the storms of the soul obey him.

48

49 Tempest-tossed souls, wherever ye may be, under whatsoever

50 conditions ye may live, know this - in the ocean of life the isles of

51 Blessedness are smiling, and the sunny shore of your ideal awaits



52 your coming. Keep your hand firmly upon the helm of thought. In the
53 barque of your soul reclines the commanding Master; He does but
54 sleep; wake Him. Self-control is strength; Right Thought is mastery;
55 Calmness is power. Say unto your heart, "Peace, be still!"