

Why Work?

ONE OF THE ADVANTAGES of work, whether one likes the thought or not, is the association it brings through cooperation. The disinterested efforts of mankind, working together in a common cause, create a unifying purpose that binds humanity together as few other things can do.

What we are wont to regard as nuisances—the homeless asking for handouts, the continuous complaints of an acquaintance, importuning letters from strangers—may be opportunities for helpfulness. We should remember that a withheld blessing impoverishes us more than it does the applicant. Service to others is one field of work where there never need be unemployment. As Elizabeth Barrett Browning accurately and beautifully observed,

*A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich;
A sick man helped by thee shall make thee
strong;
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest.*

The finest service we can give some people is to focus their attention upon something outside themselves; to lift their vision from the scratch on the end of their nose to the everlasting hills or the eternal verities; to take their minds away from their own petty problems, and direct their energies and abilities to the solving of the problems of others; to widen their horizon beyond temporary obstacles to the vistas of golden opportunities.

Let us learn to think in terms of the needs of others. Let us help people to realize their dreams—after finding out what their dreams are. What many people need is someone to listen understandingly

when they talk about what they want to do. When we think about other people and their interests and welfare, we make a magnet of ourselves that attracts to us the good things of the Spirit. Since we are to them a source of supply, they will work with might and main to enable us to continue to be that source.

Too few people think about the little things that give delight to others. Whenever we have a pleasant thought about someone not present, or wish to congratulate someone, why not post a brief note, send an email, or call? Every person we meet is hungry for friendship, and by responding to that hunger we make a real contribution to the welfare of our world. We may even become leaders in our community by friendly acts that alleviate human loneliness, thus widening our scope for furthering the progress of all humanity.

In the story *Alice in Wonderland*, we are told that Alice could not regulate her height. One minute her head bumped the ceiling, the next her chin rested on her shoe buckles. A caterpillar that happened to be sitting on a mushroom told her to nibble one side of the mushroom to grow tall and the other side to grow short; but the mushroom hasn't any sides because it is round. This teaches us that life cannot be wholly compartmentalized for it is all one piece.

Wise people don't worry if some good work they have been doing grows monotonous. They, so to speak, simply vary their diet by partaking of the other side of the mushroom, knowing that nothing has been given up that they will not joyfully again return to in season. They are cheerfully resigned to a vacation or a transfer of activity.

Robert Louis Stevenson speaks of people "tied

for life into a bag which no one can undo.” There are not many such bags which loving service won’t undo, but service of this kind is not easy. We must expect to share both the sorrows and joys of our neighbors. Though there are many times when we cannot find help, there is seldom a time when we cannot give it. It is an accepted fact that there is no better escape from morbid self-preoccupation than in service to others. Thus is the stream of life kept flowing freely; there is little chance for noisome pools of self-pity, resentment, and discouragement to form. Selfish pride, hurt feelings, envies, and jealousies can find no lodgment in a healthy vital life.

Do you remember how Robinson Crusoe fascinated you as a child? It was thrilling to read about a man who could live all alone on an island. But it was very probably not so thrilling for Robinson himself. He was in danger of losing his speech and his mind until he saved the life of the man Friday. It was not until Friday came with his strength that the heavy dugout canoe could be pushed into the water. Robinson Crusoe had passed many a black man in his travels, but he never made friends with any of them until he worked with one.

When Napoleon was exiled on St. Helena, a titled lady came to visit him. As he was about to conduct her up a set of steep, narrow stairs, he caught sight of a native staggering under a heavy load of firewood. The lady saw the laborer too, but turned to go up the steps. Napoleon detained her by taking her arm and drawing her aside out of the path, saying, “Madame, respect the burden.” And the laborer went on without a pause.

Are we respecting the burden? The swing to individualism may be serving a definite purpose in man’s evolution, but it should not go so far as to be a detriment to the growth of altruism and universalism. Too many people are relegating the care of their children to others, shifting the aged and infirm from the home to an institution, sidestepping any obligation which may interfere with their selfish freedom and bodily comfort. We harness ourselves to the work of the world in clumsy and unnatural ways. We refuse to respect life’s burdens, and so these burdens will some day, be it in a future life, refuse to respect us.

Self-centeredness takes two forms—thinking

CREATE THE OPPORTUNITY

It’s not enough to sit at home, till Fate
Doth to our door bring Opportunity;
For though we vigil keep unceasingly,
The chance desired may never reach our gate;
Or, reaching it, may yet arrive too late
To bring us any gain or good thereby.
Nay, we must wait and sow industriously
Such seeds of virile thought as shall create
Those opportunities for which we wait,
If we would taste the fruits of victory.
Since we are Gods with needs omnivorant,
We must as Gods create the thing we need.
For glory through achievement, dost thou pant?
Create the opportunity decreed
To bring thee to success, nor yet be scant
Of toil, but use it wisely. So, succeed.

—Tiperith

too well of one’s self or else thinking too ill. Psychiatrists claim that it is harder to cure the latter than the former. Persons afflicted with a strong sense of inferiority are vulnerable to every careless word, sensitive to unintentional slights, full of small prejudices. Instead of accepting with casual indifference the “give and take” of daily contact and crediting people with the good motives they usually have, these negative persons withdraw into themselves and nurse their grievances. And when they have arrived at the point of enjoying their woes and liking to talk about them, they have become neurotics; and neurotics are not very helpful in the performance of the world’s work.

Let us carry with us these words by Max Heindel: “We are now getting ready for the fast-approaching Aquarian Age with its great intellectual and spiritual development. This requires an awakening of the dormant vital body, whose keyword is repetition. The routine of our daily work furnishes this. If we rebel, it breeds monotony and retards progress. But if we leaven our labor with love, we shall advance ourselves greatly in evolution and reap the reward of contentment.” □

—Constance Wilson