

Selections from the Classic

Steps to Manhood



Steps to Manhood

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Be Polite

William of Wickham was so convinced of the value of manners that he had the phrase, “Manners Make a Man,” inscribed in several places on the walls of many of his buildings. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Good manners are made up of petty sacrifices.” A pleasant attitude, mixed with kindness, are gentle delights that win the esteem of others and often contribute to one’s success, while harsh words, bad habits, and “who cares” attitudes lock doors and close hearts.

Cultivation of politeness is like putting the finishing touch on a picture or like a flower bed encircling a lawn. It beautifies the character. Like a lamp in a dark room, it makes one’s presence cheerful. Nothing has greater influence. As Matthew Arnold said, “It is three-fourths of life.” As honey on the skin is a protection from bee stings, so politeness will protect from the stings of the world. Doors will open at its knock, sunbeams will sparkle in its presence, and everywhere, with everyone, it will be like a magic passport.

Politeness has been defined in different ways, but all meet at the same point, like the spokes of a wheel that meet in the center. “It is the art of showing, by external signs, the internal regard we have for others.” Lord Chatham says, “It is benevolence in little things,” like giving preference to others in every enjoyment at the table, walking, sitting, or standing. “It is a willingness to please and

to be pleased.” “It consists in treating others just as you love to be treated yourself.”

Jesus said, “whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them” (Matt. 7:12). All other things being equal, the boy who follows this advice will be the one who succeeds. It makes him an acceptable companion, wins friendship, and creates popularity.

There was a mother who had just scolded her son because he failed to entertain his friend who had been visiting. “I treated him the same way he treats me. When I go to his house, he doesn’t even seem to notice me,” the boy told his mother. “Do you enjoy that?” she asked. “Oh! I don’t mind. I don’t stay long,” he said. The mother replied, “I would be considered a very selfish person if my friends came to see me and I ignored them.” “Well, that’s different. You’re grown up,” answered the son. “So you really think that politeness and courtesy are not needed among boys?” The boy replied, “Well, I didn’t mean it like that.” His father, overhearing the conversation, approached his son and said, “A boy or a man who measures his treatment of others by how they treat him has no character of his own. He will never be kind or generous. If he ever wants to be a gentleman, he will be so even when others are not nice to him. If he wants to be noble, no other boy’s meanness will change his nature. Remember, every time you treat someone bad because someone else treated you bad, you are not hurting them but lowering yourself. Be true to your best self, and no boy can drag you down, nor will he want to.”

The real gentleman stands for such personal qualities as honesty, truthfulness, gentleness, and gracefulness, which characterize a boy or man. Such a gentleman will control his appetite, refine his taste, subdue his feelings, and be careful with his words. When accidentally bumping into someone, he will say, "I'm sorry," or "Excuse me." When receiving a gift or extending a favor, he will reply, "Thank you."

The truly polite boy is not only respectful to his parents but also to his sisters and brothers, always returning a pleasant "Thank you" for any kindness received from them and showing as much courtesy to all at home as to those in the home of a neighbor. "A beautiful behavior," says an American essayist, "is better than a beautiful form; it gives a higher pleasure than statues or pictures; it is the finest of the fine arts," it gives grace to one's bearing and enables one to look on the bright and beautiful side of things.

The manner in which a person conducts himself in the home largely determines his course and conduct in life. He who is polite and kind to his parents, considering their wishes, heeding their advice and counsel, paves the way to future happiness and success. But those who ignore paternal suggestions, speaking and acting disrespectfully, are seldom respected and are always at a disadvantage. When Prince Bismarck was a boy, he was scolded by his father for speaking poorly about the King. "Learn to speak reverently of his Majesty," said the old squire of Varzin, "and you will grow accustomed to thinking of him with respect." Bismarck took the advice to heart and profited from it.

Be Truthful

While a ship was crossing the English Channel, a man stood beside one of the helmsmen. It was a calm, pleasant evening, and no one expected a storm. Then the officer on watch heard the sail start flapping as if the wind had suddenly shifted, and springing to the wheel, he looked at the compass. "You are a half-degree off course," he said sharply to the man at the wheel, who quickly turned and fixed the direction. The man watching said, "It must be important to steer very accurately if only half a degree off course is so important." "Certainly," the officer replied, "a half a degree is enough to bring us crashing directly into the rocks." What a lesson for every boy. Such a small turn from strict truthfulness strands one on the rocks of liars.

Perhaps the shortest definition of a lie is "The intention to deceive." It may not be a complete lie to hide a crime or to remain silent to protect one's self, but if the intent is to mislead or deceive others, it is still wrong. Dewey said, "The essence of the thing lies in the intention," and if the intention is to mislead, it is, as Immanuel Kant says, "a destruction of personal integrity." As he contends, "a lie is the abandonment, or, as it were, the annihilation of the dignity of man." It will undermine the noble instincts of any boy and cause his character to collapse.

Much is said nowadays about degrees in lying. That is, lying in a small way. There is the so-called white lie of custom, when a certain term is slightly misrepresented to make a bargain; the white lie of

courtesy, when one makes politeness the garb behind which he deceives; the white lie of necessity, when one would evade the truth by nodding the head or giving a wrong impression. Some men, and even great men, have maintained that this is sometimes a necessity. They say, "You must speak the truth generally, but you may tell a little white lie when it is convenient," but nothing so corrupts early simplicity, quickly destroys the nobler instincts, and depraves the heart as a lie.

If a boy will lie about one thing, he cannot be trusted in anything. If he is branded as a liar, what teacher will respect him, what businessman will engage him, and what court will accept his testimony? "I have seldom known anyone," said Paley, "who deserted truth in trifles, who could be trusted in matters of importance." Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "Sin has many tools, but a lie is the handle which fits them all." It destroys confidence, establishes false friends, and saps the joy of life. It is the root of all wrongs, oppressions, cruelties, and crimes, and what boy is there who dare do it when God prohibits it?

Owen said, "One lie must be interwoven with another, or it will soon rain through." Lying brings misery. It troubles the conscience, destroys peace of mind, and makes one suspicious of others. Because of this, Eugene Field, while still a young man, walked thirty miles to confess to his employer, and to ask forgiveness for a lie he had told him. Lying brings punishment, for "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord" (Prov. 12:22). Because of

this, Elisha's servant was struck with leprosy, Ananias and Sapphira with death, and many others have had the seal of God's wrath placed upon them.

One day, as Archbishop Leighton was going from Glasgow to Dunblane, a storm of lightning and thunder burst upon him. He was observed from a distance by two men of bad character. They did not have the courage to rob him, but wanting to get his money, one said, "I will lie down by the side as if I were dead, and you tell the archbishop that I was killed by the lightning, and beg for money to bury me." When the Archbishop arrived, the wicked wretch told the fabricated story. The Archbishop sympathized with the pretended survivor, gave him money, and proceeded on his journey. But when the man returned to his companion, he found him really dead. Immediately, he began to cry aloud, "Oh, Sir! He's dead! Oh, Sir, he's really dead!" And with this, the Archbishop discovered the fraud. Turning to the living man, he said solemnly, "It is a dangerous thing to trifle with the judgment of God." How much better and safer it is to speak the truth, for as Alice Cary wrote, "There is nothing so kingly as kindness, and nothing so royal as truth."

A lie, as one King of Prussia said, "sometimes does good for twenty-four hours, but like a battle well fought, right comes off more than conqueror." Falsehood is always defeated. It shrinks at detection and, in due time, is compelled to confess. Truth is sure and has a firm foundation because it is an attribute of God. And "God and truth," said Theodore Parker, "are always on the same side."

Be Dutiful

“Duty” may be defined as the thing that *can* be done because it is the thing that *should* be done. To be dutiful implies a respect and reverence for others who are placed in positions of authority in whatever capacity, whether parents and grandparents, pastors and elders in the church, bosses and managers at work, or Presidents and Kings of nations.

The boy who is not an orphan is fortunate, and blessed is he who knows how to appreciate his parents. If God has been kind enough to spare father and mother, children should be smart enough to respect them. There is nothing more inconsiderate than a disrespectful attitude toward parents. Solomon said, “The eye that mocks his father, and scorns obedience to his mother, the ravens of the valley will pick it out” (Prov. 30:17). The boy who heeds parental counsel shall be included in the promise of the first commandment, “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you” (Ex. 20:12).

A boy should obey his parents because God commands it. It is a law written in our natures as well as in the Bible. General Hancock once hastily rose from his table and exclaimed, “I left my boy on London Bridge, and told him to wait there till I came back.” He hurried to the spot, and there the brave boy was, and had been for several hours! Such obedience was the groundwork of a noble character.

Obedience to parents is an evidence of Christian piety. It should be prompt, cheerful, and

without protest. This will give great pleasure to them, as well as to the son or daughter. When the great general, Epaminondas, conquered Sparta and saved his country, he was greatly applauded but responded, "My joy arises from my sense of that which the news of my victory will give my father and mother." Disobedience produces the most painful suffering in the parent, which sooner or later reacts on the child. "A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke" (Prov. 13:1). "A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him" (Prov. 17:25).

A boy should obey his parents because God's law contains a reason; "that your days may be long upon the land" (Ex. 20:12). Here we see that obedience to our parents will lead to long life and prosperity. By it, the boy learns self-control, and a prompt submission, as a principle of action. "Such a boy will, in all probability, soon become a man of the same character. He will obey the laws of health. Entering business, he will obey the laws of success, industry, perseverance, economy, and enterprise. In complete control of his life, he will also be a law-abiding citizen in society. Such character tends to long life and the enjoyment of the gift of God."

When Washington was a young man, he wanted to be a sailor, and his mother gave a reluctant consent. All things were ready. The ship waited on the river. His luggage was in the boat waiting to take him to it. As he went to say goodbye to his mother, he found her in tears. At once, he ordered his trunk to be returned and sent word to the ship that he would

not go. "I will not break my mother's heart to gratify myself," he said, and his mother replied, "George, God has promised to bless those who honor their parents, and He will surely bless you." Did God not bless George Washington? He lived to be nearly seventy years of age and became not only a prosperous man but the first President of his country. "I was sure," said his mother, "that George would be a great man because he was a good boy."

Coming home from the hayfield, a tired and hungry young man was met by his father at the gate and was asked to go two miles away into town on an errand. At first, he wanted to say no, but a thought came to his mind, and he decided to do it cheerfully. "Thank you," said his father, "you have always been good to me. I was going to go myself, but somehow I don't feel very strong." Again the father thanked his son and turned to the house. The son hurried away, and soon returned. As he neared the house, he saw that something unusual had occurred. The farm workers were all standing around the door of the house. As the son approached, one of the men turned to him with tearful eyes and said, "Your father is dead. He fell just as he reached the door. The words he spoke to you were the last he uttered." Years passed, and that son, relating this incident, said, "I have thanked God over and over again for the last words of my father on earth, 'You have always been good to me.'" May the same be said of each of us.

As Charles Kingsley wrote, "Do noble things, not dream them all day long, And so make life, death, and that vast forever, One grand sweet song."

Be Temperate

Among the greatest curses in our land is the use of drugs and alcohol. They result in broken homes, crime, and death. John Gough once said that “ninety-nine out of every hundred men are ruined morally, intellectually and religiously by the use of drink,” or perhaps some other drug.

When Colonel Alexander Hogeland was sitting in his room in Louisville some years ago, a lame boy knocked at the door. He said, “My father is going to be hung tomorrow. The Governor will not pardon him. He killed my mother when he was drunk. He was a good father, and we were always happy, but he could not stop drinking. Will you go pray with him, and then come to our house when his body is brought to us?” The Colonel did as requested, and found that the demon drink was the sole cause of that family’s ruin. The father was hung, and when the body was taken to the home, he was there. Six poor orphans were curled up on a bundle of straw and rags, crying with a grief that would make the hardest heart break. The crippled boy, only fourteen years old, was the sole support of the little family. The father’s body was brought in by two officers. The plain board coffin was rested on two old chairs, and the officers hurried out of the room, away from the terrible scene. “Come,” said the crippled boy to the children, “come and kiss papa’s face before it gets cold,” and all six children kissed the face of that father and, smoothing the brow, sobbed in broken accents, “Whiskey did it. Papa was good, but whiskey did it.”

Alcohol, like other drugs, is a deadly poison. Drop a little on the eye, and it destroys the sight. Sprinkle a few drops on the leaf of a plant, and it will kill it. Immerse a tadpole in it, and it ceases to live. Drink it, and its action produces weakness, and its reaction, nervousness. In a word, alcohol is the devil's best drug and the boy's worst enemy. General Harrison said, "I was one of a class of seventeen young men who graduated at college. The other sixteen now fill drunkards' graves. I owe all my health, happiness, and prosperity to a resolution I made when starting out in life, that I would avoid drinking alcohol. That vow I have never broken."

It pays to abstain from alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs. They destroy the moral sensibilities, weaken the nerves, impair the brain, feed disease, and at last bite "like a serpent" (Prov. 23:32). On the other hand, as Theodore Parker said, "Temperance is corporeal piety; it is the preservation of divine order in the body." Nothing is so conducive to one's happiness and success in life than total abstinence from drugs and alcohol.

The good and wise Governor Buckingham of Connecticut gave as his reason for total abstinence: "If I indulge in alcohol, I am not safe. There is no degradation so low that a man will not sink to it and no crime so horrible that he will not commit it when he is drunk. But even if someone could prove to me that I could drink and not be injured, I would still refrain because I would fear that someone, seeing me, would be influenced to drink because of me, and fall into the pit of a drunkard because they were unable to

quit.” If there were more men as considerate, there would be fewer drinking husbands and damaged children because of drunken fathers.

You never hear stories of men who grow up and say, “I’m sorry I didn’t learn to love alcohol, or marijuana, or some other drug when I was younger,” but all through history, there have been millions who have regretted drinking alcohol and using drugs. There are endless stories of men and women who cry, “I wish I had never taken a drink, smoked marijuana, or used drugs. It has made a mess of my life.” Be wise and decide never to use drugs or alcohol.

It is a great lie to think it is cool or manly to drink or use drugs. Manliness implies strength and courage. A man who gets drunk or high lacks both. Being a man also implies using reason. Liquor and other drugs rob men of this, and a boy shows his manliness by leaving it alone and helping others stay away from it as well.

My boy, be temperate. Do your best to stop the great tide of pain and sorrow caused by drugs and alcohol. They are a dirty, dangerous, and expensive habit. They injure the body, mind, and soul. There is no way to calculate the damage that has been done by these substances or to estimate the evil they produce. So many aspiring young men and women have lost their ambition and destroyed their lives once they became slaves to drugs or alcohol. While the God that made you made the drug, He did not make the mouth for this purpose, so please be wise and do not ridicule the contents of this chapter. Listen to the warning, and turn away from drugs and alcohol.

Be Kind

Many years ago, General David S. Stanley was laying out the route for a long railroad across the country. There were two thousand men, twenty-five hundred horses and mules, and a row of two hundred and fifty heavily loaded wagons. One day, the general was riding in front of a long chain of wagons when suddenly his voice rang out, "Stop!" A bird's nest lay on the ground directly in front of him. In another moment, the horses would have trampled on the baby birds. The mother bird was flying about and chirping in great anxiety, but the brave general had not brought out his army to destroy a bird's nest. He stopped for a moment, looked at the little birds, and then gave the order, "Go around it!" Men, horses, mules, and wagons turned and spared the home of the helpless bird. Years later, those who crossed the plains saw a great bend in the trail. It was the bend made to avoid crushing the bird's nest. Kindness paves the way for others to follow.

Kindness is one of the greatest words in the English language. It is both mighty and gentle. Few things cost so little, but benefit so much as kindness. Boys should be kind to one another. Unkind acts are as permanent as ink. They are like letters written in lemon juice, which become visible when brought before the fire. They stir the heart, awaken the memory, and distress the soul.

There was once a king who had a boy that he loved dearly. He gave him beautiful rooms to live in, with rich pleasures, and servants to wait on him

wherever he went. He also gave him teachers to gain knowledge, but with all this, the young prince was unhappy. He wore a frown wherever he went, and was always wishing for something he did not have. One day a magician came to the palace. Determined to cheer the boy up, he wrote something with invisible ink on a piece of paper. He then gave the boy a candle and told him to light it, hold it under the paper, and see what he could read. When he left, the boy did what he said, and the invisible ink turned into beautiful blue letters, forming the words, "Do something kind to someone every day. Try to make those around you smile." The prince was so impressed with the words that he decided to put them into practice, and this resulted in his becoming very popular and useful in the kingdom. If each boy would daily see how often he could make those around him smile, the world would be a much better place.

My boy, be kind. "A man who has friends must himself be friendly" (Prov. 18:24). John Ruskin once said, "A little thought and a little kindness are often worth more than a great deal of money." Of Cornelius Vanderbilt, it was said, "He was a man of the utmost kindness. He treated people of all positions with the same courtesy and of all ages with the same respect." It is kindness in the heart, on the lips, and at the fingertips that wins the affection not only of animals and birds, but also of men, women, and children.

Be kind in voice. No body part has more power for good or evil than the mouth. A single word may sting like a bee or soothe like lotion. It can inspire to

action, drive to madness, or lower to despair. It can cut the heart like sorrow or cheer like sunshine. Look out for your words. Be careful what tone of voice you use. It is not always the words one says that are important, but also the way they are spoken. Elihu Burritt wisely stated, "there is no one thing which love so much needs as a sweet voice, to tell what it means and feels... One must start in youth, and be on the watch night and day, at work and at play, to get and keep a voice which shall speak at all times the thoughts of a kind heart."

During the famine in Russia, when thousands were on the verge of starvation, Count Tolstoy passed a beggar on the street corner. Stretching out his gaunt hands, the miserable creature asked for money. Tolstoy felt inside his pockets for a coin to give him. He turned his pockets inside out but found nothing. His money had already been spent on charity, and he had nothing. Taking the beggar's hand in both of his, he said, "Do not be angry with me, brother. I have nothing with me." The gaunt face lit up as the man lifted his bloodshot eyes, and his pale blue lips parted in a smile as he replied, "But you called me brother, and that was a great gift." Yes, kind, gentle, sympathetic words cost nothing, but they greatly help others. They are like oil to machinery. They can calm anger and be a tonic to the disheartened. Therefore, watch your words, for words are powerful things. Like bees, they may be sweet as honey or sharp like a sting. They can bless like the warm, glad sunshine and brighten the lonely life, or they can cut in the strife of anger, like a two-edged knife.

Be Cautious

There once lived a knight named Sir John Giffard of Chillington, who had a beautiful leopard. One day the animal escaped from its cage, and Sir John and his son immediately went after it, knowing that the leopard would attack and kill anyone it came across. At the top of a hill, a mile from his house, the knight saw the animal about to attack a woman and child. Sir John drew his bow and arrow, but he was breathless from running so hard. His son, fearing he may be too weak to kill the animal, shouted, "Take aim, draw strong!" Then, mustering his strength, he aimed and shot the leopard's heart, saving the woman and baby. In consideration of this brave and skillful deed, the Giffards of Chillington adopted, as their crest, a leopard's head and an archer with a bent bow, bearing the motto, "Take aim, draw strong."

This is what many great men have done in regard to some forms of entertainment, the influences of which have proved destructive to the character. To enjoy oneself is a God-given right, provided that the enjoyment does not injure our health, weaken our morals, or compromise our estimate on living.

Entertainment is used as a means of refreshing the mind and replenishing the strength of the body, that the work of life may be easier and better done. When it begins to be the main thing in our lives, or when it is used to defile the mind and impair the mental health, it becomes dangerous.

Amusements that consume the hours of the night that were intended for sleep, making a person

nervous, creating an unnatural desire for romance and adventure, are wrong. Entertainment that arouses or stimulates impure desires and appetites, suggests wrong things, or leads us to be dissatisfied with our lives, should be avoided because their tendency is downward instead of upward.

Care must be taken in choosing what kind of music we listen to, movies we watch, books we read, and games we play. Things should be chosen that have some advantage—things that educate, uplift, or inspire. We should avoid places that lead to bad company, drinking, horse racing, gambling, or any place where so many are allured to destruction. Multitudes of boys have been dragged down morally, socially, financially, and spiritually under their influences.

Christians must be careful of the games and various forms of entertainment they indulge in, especially today. If they are a threat to your mental or spiritual health or violate your moral standards, shun them like a plague. Orange trees cannot live and bear fruit in Labrador. Neither can holy lives thrive among sinful pleasures that attack modesty and honesty of purpose. Don't throw away your time in immoral forms of entertainment. Time is precious. As Schiller says, "The moment we forego eternity itself cannot retrieve." Use time wisely.

Murillo, a Spanish painter, painted a wonderful picture of a monk in his prison cell, with pencil in hand, waiting on death row, while writing out the story of his life. It was said that the monk was called to his execution but pleaded for just a little more time

to finish his autobiography, which was granted. The famous artist painted the moment the monk returned to his cell as he wrote with intensity, racing against time. Murillo wanted to capture that feeling of the value of time, which was quickly running out. So all of us have limited time. We should use it to our advantage, guarding against wasted dangers that corrupt and destroy us while focusing on those things that are lovely, just, and true.

An old sea captain was once asked if he knew where all the rocks were on the path he sailed. There is a world of wisdom in his answer. He said, "I do not need to know where all the rocks are. I only need to know where the rocks are not, and stay in the clear pathway." By watching, reading, listening to, and playing "whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report," we may safeguard ourselves against the rocks that Satan throws out to sink us and sap us of our spiritual vigor (Phil. 4:8).

Why should we feast on garbage when there are plenty of good things out there: healthful forms of entertainment. The Christian life is not void of fun. We simply have fun the right way. Enjoy yourself. To dry up the fountains of joy within, to crush out the spontaneous impulses of fun that are a part of our complete life, is a crime against nature. Life will have enough sorrow without making ourselves chronically cheerless. The right of enjoyment is a divine right and should be lawfully used and enjoyed. Not only that, but it is invigorating.

Be Hopeful

Life belongs to the hopeful. It has been said that a pessimist is one who has the choice of two evils and takes them both. A discouraged man is defeated before he begins. Hope is a source of consolation to know that, in whatever circumstance a boy may be placed, there is, even in the darkest place, a door of comfort and a north star to fix his eyes on—namely hope. Without it, the world would be a desert and man the most wretched of all God's creatures. With it, no circumstance can defeat us.

There may be failures, but hope believes in final success. It whispers, "nothing is impossible," smiles on the struggling, sustains the aspiring, and cheers with an assurance that leads us to success. It lit the lantern on the ship of Columbus, waved the torch before Bacon as he descended into nature's laboratory, supported the steps of Newton when he wandered into the dim solitude of unknown worlds, sprinkled the canvas of Titian with purple lines of summer, sent Watts' engine snorting along the rails, and Fulton's steamboat puffing up the Hudson.

Hope is a beautiful word. Its definition makes every bosom bound and burn. It is called "music to the ear of the young," "health to the sick," and a "glorious expectation" of all. To the athlete, it is the victor's crown. To the student, it is passing the test. But to the Christian, it means more. It is so intimately associated with practical godliness that religion is called "hope by grace," "a better hope," "the blessed hope," and "a living hope" (2 Thess. 2:16; Heb. 7:19;

Titus 2:13; 1 Peter 1:3). The Christian's God is named "the God of hope," "Jesus Christ, our hope," and His finished work, "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven" (Rom. 15:13; 1 Tim. 1:1; Col. 1:5).

The boy who places his trust in God is never hopeless. Sinful pleasures may tempt him and even at times defeat him, but hope hangs its rainbow on the darkest cloud. To give up hope is to give up the beauty of life. Paul called hope "sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6:19). Like the anchor that is locked on stone, holding the ship still in the storm, so hope keeps the Christian firm, joyful, and faithful when life sweeps over us, engulfing us under the waves of sorrow and despair. Why? Because the rope that holds the anchor is faith, and the rock that holds the anchor is Christ, and the reason we believe it is because the Word of God says so.

Now anchors are not needed in mid-ocean, because the rocks are so far down that they cause no threat to the ship. With a storm before or behind it, the ship could smile and say, "I can race as fast as you can drive," but when nearing the coast, extra care must be taken. If a storm rises close to shore, the anchor is prepared because the wind may push the ship against the rocks, crush it, and sink it. In the same way, the anchor of hope is not as much needed in the mid-ocean of prosperity, peace, and the fullness of God's love, as it is near the shore when we see storms rise in our lives. The anchor of hope in Jesus Christ must be prepared for these times.

Without this strong anchor, many boys have crashed on the rock of skepticism. When the breeze

of laughter or the winds of arguments are brought against them, some boys forget their promises and begin to drift towards the deadly rocks of unbelief. No boy's anchor is safe if they watch godless movies, read books of skeptics, listen to music that inspires doubt, or hang around with unbelieving friends.

Without this sure and steadfast anchor, many boys have drifted upon the reefs of temptation. An unanchored ship may rest on the waters as calmly and beautifully as in a painted picture, but almost before one realizes, the undercurrent carries it away, and a terrible crash informs the captain that it has been stranded on a reef or struck a rock. Hundreds of boys have been ruined in the same way, not by the breeze of adversity or strong winds of persecution, but by the subtle undercurrents of temptation.

Thank God, this hope in Christ is "sure and steadfast." You may have smashed against the rocks, or, as Theodore Cuyler said, "you may be obliged to throw out much of your cargo into the sea, but if Jesus Christ is in your soul, you cannot wreck." The anchor will hold you under every circumstance, in every storm, and in every trial.

When the enemy sends his waves of tragedy or seeks to allure you into some sin, invisible power will help you to escape him. When all appears dark and gloomy, look up. Whether you see it or not, above the dark clouds rests a shining sun. Soon you will hear the lark break forth in song. When discouraged and washed with grief, be quiet and listen to the Savior whispering, "Hold on! Put your hope in Christ, 'and your hope will not be cut off'" (Prov. 23:18).

Be Faithful

Life must not be measured by the number of years one lives as we would number the pages of this book, but by what one feels, thinks, and does. Paul said, "To live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). In Queen Mary's time, Julius Palmer, being asked to recant his faith in Christ, said he would rather yield his life.

Many boys start well in the Christian life, but soon after, they stray away. They put their hand to the plow but start looking back. They boil over with enthusiasm, but when trials and ridicule come, they follow Christ at a distance. They renounce the world for a season but, like Demas, soon return to it again. Many who have at some time been numbered with the saints have later turned out to be betrayers.

Benedict Arnold, who fought for America in the Revolutionary War, later defected and went to the side of the enemy, where he plotted to betray his homeland. It is sad to read of his last hours in London. It is said that as he was about to die, he put on his old American uniform that Washington gave him after his victory at Saratoga and said, "Let me die in this old uniform that I fought in. May God forgive me for ever putting on any other."

Unfaithfulness is a gradually increasing sin. There is first a lack of love for God. Then disbelief creeps into the heart, earnestness is lost, unwatchfulness results, joy vanishes, and sinful living follows. In the end, unless there is a returning to God, like the prodigal son to his father, death becomes sad and eternity awful.

On the other hand, faithfulness is beautiful and noble. It never fails to bring respect and honor. Fame comes only to a few, but faithfulness should actuate the life of every boy. When John was banished to the island of Patmos, he had a vision in which he was commanded to write to the pastor of the church in Smyrna concerning many things. He closed his letter with these words, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). What a promise! No other person ever offered such a reward with such a condition. Faithfulness must characterize the aspirant, not for a few days, months, or years, but "until death." The Christian has nothing to fear. Just like the bee loses its power to hurt when its stinger has been removed, death has lost its power to sting those who are safe in Christ. It lost its power to harm when Christ died for us.

In the first century lived a boy by the name of Polycarp. He was taught by John the Apostle. After embracing the Christian religion, he studied theology and finally became a bishop. After years of service, persecution ignited against the Christians, and Polycarp was arrested. Placed on trial, he was urged to renounce Christ, to which he replied, "For eighty-six years I have served Him, and He has never wronged me. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?" Then he was led away and burned at the stake, which he made memorable by one of the most beautiful prayers ever uttered.

My boy, what better advice can this book close with than the call to be faithful? You are the architects of your life. You are the one who must

build your own character. While your parents may guide you, the choice is up to you. Be courageous like Joshua, self-reliant like Nehemiah, obedient like Abraham, persevering like Jacob, decisive like Moses, administrative like Solomon, above reproach like Daniel, long-suffering like Paul, self-disciplined like David, prayerful like Elijah, masters of passions like Joseph, bold like Peter, self-surrendered like Noah, godlike like Enoch, faith-acting like Abel, and in all things, with all persons, at all times, exemplify the spirit of Christ.

Be faithful to your Christian profession, to your church, and to Christ. Be faithful under all circumstances and in all places, faithful unto death. Above the grave of his hero, Homer wrote the words, "He was a brave man." Above his hero, Plato wrote, "He was a wise man." Above his hero, Alcibiades said, "He was a rich man," but the motto for the Christian's tomb are the words written on Lincoln's tomb, which he wanted more than anything, stating that, "He was faithful." And that of Reverend Henry Weston Smith, who was killed by the Indians while on his way from Deadwood, Dakota, to preach at Crook City, were the words, "Faithful unto death."

Five years after Allen K. Capron entered the services, he rose to the rank of captain. That same year, he was killed at Las Guasimas, the first officer to die in the Spanish-American War. Approaching the body, his father lifted the hat that covered his face and said, "Well done, my boy." May others say of you, "He was faithful," and may Christ say to you, "Well done!" May the same be said of each of us.

Be Patriotic

For centuries, nations have employed patriotic songs to inspire courage and love of country. France sings her "Marseillaise," Norway the "Song of the Battle Axe," England, "God Save the King," but best of all is our national hymn which sings, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrims' pride; from every mountain side let freedom ring!"

The United States is a symbol of greatness. Beautiful memories surround it. Great names are associated with it. It is honored in songs, applauded in legislative halls, inscribed on banners, lisped by juvenile tongues, and honored by all nations.

Learn to love and admire the national flag. Honored with priceless traditions, its stars and stripes tell stories of the sufferings of the past, the prosperity of the present, and the glories of the future that will attend the onward march of this great Republic. It is the hallowed emblem of the world's greatest nation and of its noble citizens. Of Sherman, it was said that he never failed to salute the flag by taking off his hat in its presence. That flag is the emblem of all we are and all we expect to be.

Be patriotic. Study the questions that have a bearing on the well-being of the people. In the past two hundred years, millions of foreigners have settled in this land. Many are God-fearing men and women, but many more are entirely out of harmony with our principles and institutions. Truly America is the "mother with the ever-open door."

The government of the United States is unique. It has given more freedom than any other nation. "Nowhere else has government so ennobled man, so elevated woman, so inspired its young men with heroism and ambition, so helped them in their aims in life, so made citizenship glorious by the expansion of Christian morality and intelligence, so fostered letters, the arts and sciences, so protected every creed, so smoothed the road of life and given to all an equal chance for happiness and homes."

Many men, as well as boys, think patriotism means fighting, but that is not true. "A patriot is a person who loves his land, honors its history, applauds its achievements, does not minimize its motives, but says, my heart and hand for its prosperity and perpetuity, upholding and upbuilding." To cultivate this spirit, every boy needs to read and study the history of this nation, follow the Pilgrims across the Atlantic, associate with them and their descendants in their hardships, fight with them in their battles, share with them in their victories, and then he will be thoroughly imbued with this spirit.

It may be that you will never fight in a war, but that is no reason why you should not be just as patriotic. The boy who is law-abiding, who opposes everything that undermines the national fabric, who is faithful to God's law, avoids bad language, bad literature, and all sins, is a patriot in the true sense of the word and can be relied on in times of peace, as well as war, to do his best for the country.

To be patriotic requires honesty. We must treat all people fairly, even if they believe differently than

we do about how to deal with some of the important issues facing our nation. We do not always see and understand alike, but we must strive to promote and preserve the integrity of the nation. In the opening hours of the French Revolution, Mirabeau inspired a fight in Paris which led to social chaos, provoking Madame Roland's dying words, "Oh, liberty, what crimes are done in thy name!" We still have some like Mirabeaus here in America, always starting fights, but as lovers of our country, we must hate wrong, uphold right, and defend the principles of the Declaration of Independence.

In 1820, Sydney Smith, of England, asked the questions contentiously, "In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book? Or looks at an American picture, or statue? What new constellations have been discovered by the telescopes of Americans? What have they done in mathematics? Who drinks out of American glasses? Or eats from American plates? Or wears American coats or gowns? Or sleeps in American blankets?" If Sydney Smith had lived only a half-century longer, he would have found the food, clothing, literature, inventions, gold, and influence of what he once referred to as "this self-adulating race," controlling the markets of the world more than any other. America has invaded the business centers of every nation, has set a pace in civilization and evangelization that few can keep up with, has become a peace factor among the warlike people of the world, and in almost everything, as Herbert Spencer said of our mechanical appliances, is "ahead of all nations."

Be Christian

Many names and titles are significant, but none of them mean so much or have such honor as the word “Christian.” A Christian is a Christ-lover and a worshipper of Christ because he sees God in Christ, and in Christ, he sees the world’s Redeemer and his own personal Savior. He lives *in* the world but is not *of* the world. His goal is “not to make a living,” as Governor Russell of Massachusetts used to say, “but to make a life.” He is far more concerned about this than about dying.

To become a Christian is not a hard thing, but to live the life of one is a battle with the world, the flesh, and Satan. There are three specific instructions in the New Testament to become a Christian. First, repentance. “Jesus came to Galilee, preaching... Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:14, 15). Repentance means being sorry for the bad things we did in the past and having a desire to change. Second, confession of sin. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8, 9). Third, faith in Christ to save. Paul said to the jailer, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31).

A father and son were once walking on a dangerous trail in the mountains. As they were walking by some beautiful flowers, the boy, seeing a lovely flower waving in the breeze, quickly reached down to grab it, when his foot slipped. He rolled

down the steep hill, on the edge of the cliff, where he grabbed some tall bushes. With all his strength, he held on, calling out for help, fearful of falling to his death. It was impossible for the father to reach his son with his hands, but he carried a cane with a hook on the end of it. Stretching it out over the cliff, he latched it around the boy's belt and began to pull him up, but the boy could not see his father over the cliff and was fearful, so he continued to cling to the bush. Finally, he heard the voice of his father calling, "Let go of the bushes, my son, and I will save you." To the boy, it felt like he would fall to his death if he let go, but trusting his father's command, he let go of the bush and was pulled up the hill to safety.

That boy was saved through faith, trusting in his father. His belief in his father's word saved him. If he kept holding onto the bushes, not trusting his father, he would have died. To be saved, every boy must let go of his hold on sin and give himself up to Christ's power and mercy, and then he will find to his joy that Christ saves "to the uttermost" (Heb. 7: 25).

Solomon said there is "a time for every purpose under heaven" (Eccl. 3:1), and no purpose is greater, and no time more important, than when a boy becomes a Christian. Youth is the most important period of one's life. It is the time when the mind is most susceptible, the heart is most tender, and the will is most moldable. This is the time when tastes and biases are created, habits are acquired, and character is formed, to a great degree. No other time in life is full of greater possibilities or opportunities for usefulness than this time.

Solomon said, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth” (Eccl. 12:1). That is the best and most profitable time to turn to Christ. Jeremiah and John the Baptist loved and worshipped God in their youth. Josiah knew the Lord at eight years old. Timothy knew the Scriptures and loved Christ from childhood. Polycarp accepted Christ at nine, Jonathan Edwards at seven, Isaac Watts at nine, Adam Clarke at four, William Penn at nine, Matthew Henry at eleven, Robert Hall at twelve, Augustus Toplady at sixteen, while Joseph Griggs not only became a Christian very young but wrote his first hymn when he was ten years old.

Youth is the best time to become a Christian. A boy should be a Christian for the sake of safety. As one grows away from boyhood, he grows away from the opportunities for salvation. He is liable to drift where the current is too strong for human power to battle against. What better promise can a young man find than the King James Version of Proverbs 8:17, which says, “those that seek me early shall find me”?

A boy should be a Christian that he may be happy – since holiness and happiness are inseparable. A boy should be a Christian to be useful. The boy who loves Christ will be a rich blessing in many ways to others. A boy should also be a Christian because it is right. Right is better than might, and worth more than gold. My boy, be a Christian. To be a Christian is the most satisfactory, honorable, influential course to pursue. It gives unspeakable joy in life, peace in death, and glory hereafter. So why not come to Christ now?

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