

The Grace of Explanation

A near-sighted girl who had been introduced to a college student met him soon after and failed to recognize him. The young man had lifted his hat and was deeply hurt at the imagined slight. Hearing of the fact through a friend, the offender lost no time in sending an explanation of her apparent rudeness. A flush of surprise came over the sensitive boy's face as he said, "She has made me her friend for life."

These incidents emphasize the old French proverb that all being explained all is pardoned, and open one's eyes anew to the reciprocal qualities needful to social harmony. Only those edges dovetail in which the points of one side are met by the indentures of the other, and the person who scorns to offer a reasonable explanation is like an ignorant carpenter who attempts to fit point to point and hollow to hollow.

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THEOLOGIANS tell us that conscience is not a reasoning faculty, that the judgment maps out the situation in all its phases while conscience declares the unerring alternative, "do it," or "do it not." What conscience is to the spiritual nature, intuition is to the social nature. It is a God-given faculty which may be clouded by neglect or deadened by disobedience to its decrees; or it may, by prompt acceptance of its dictates, grow into the genius of our lives.

A young woman came to me the other day with a little confidence and a little deduction therefrom. The deduction had come with the convincing force of experience, quite apart from the poetic pleasure she had taken in Browning's earlier wording of it,

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"I used to hold by the instructed brain;
. . . the heart leads surelier."

At the seashore she had met a brilliant society woman, and had been led into a somewhat intimate acquaintance with her. On parting the elder woman had given the younger a cordial invitation to visit her when in the city where she lived. Some months later my friend visited New York, and, remembering the proposal, followed a natural inclination to send her her card. Before the mail was collected however, she had time to reconsider her act. "The lady is very rich," she said to herself; "she is surrounded by her own gay circle; her engagements are many; why should I fancy she cares to see a summer acquaintance who is plain and poor and a rustic at best?" So, blushing at her own folly, she threw the card into the fire.

A month later, by one of those

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the great world is after all but a little ball lying in God's palm, she learned that the very week in which the impulse to visit her friend had taken hold of her, that lady had been bowed by a greater sorrow; and that in her pride and anguish and humiliation her thoughts had gone back to her strong, pure, unspoiled companion of the summer before, and that she had longed for a clasp of her hand and the kindly generosity of her interpretations.

"And I failed her," the girl said, sorrowfully. "Being rebuffed could not have hurt me half so much. Friendliness ought not to be an affair of calculation, but of inspiration."

This was her little deduction; and I thought of the strong posthumous words of Emerson:

"If we could retain our early innocence, we might trust our feet uncommanded to take the right way to our friend in the woods; but we have

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interfered too often, the feet have lost, by our distrust, their proper virtue, and we take the wrong path and miss him." And again, "Right thought comes spontaneously, comes like the morning wind, comes daily, like daily bread, to humble service. It does not need to pump your brains to think rightly. Oh no, the ingenious person is warped by his ingenuity and misses."

"Thank God, no paradise stands barred to entry." This inspiration which the young woman craved, call it intuition if you will, resides in all of us. To cultivate it we have simply to welcome its calls; to hesitate for no feeling of bashfulness or awkwardness, but to put into direct, instantaneous practice whatever kind, helpful thoughts occur to us. After all, why are we here, if not to "make life less difficult to those about us"?

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TAKING THE INITIATIVE

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INTO a well-filled street-car running along a fashionable quarter of a western city there entered the other day a poorly dressed little woman carrying a handsome sturdy boy. He was about two years old and possessed a vocabulary of just that number of words. He would look down the aisle towards some gentleman and call "Papa" in the most seductive of tones, trying it upon all the men in the car, meeting always with a quick response and filling the intervals of conversation with ingratiating smiles.

As the baby went out on his mother's shoulder he fixed his eyes upon the one person who had paid no attention to his advances, a richly dressed, proud-faced woman seated

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in a corner, and, stretching out his small hand towards her as he passed called, "Hello!" There was an instant of expectant silence. The men looked over their papers, and the women held their breath. Was the small chap's friendliness to meet with open repulse? There was just a flash of hesitation on the lady's part before she returned his homely word, "Hello," adding with a smile and a wave of her hand, "Good-bye."

The men again bent their eyes on their newspapers, the women gathered up their slipping parcels; but there was an air of courtesy abroad which one does not often associate with the atmosphere of electric cars.

"They have half conquered Fate who go half-way to meet her," quoted a woman to whom a younger girl had been telling the incident; "that little fellow will succeed in life if he keeps on as he has begun. The

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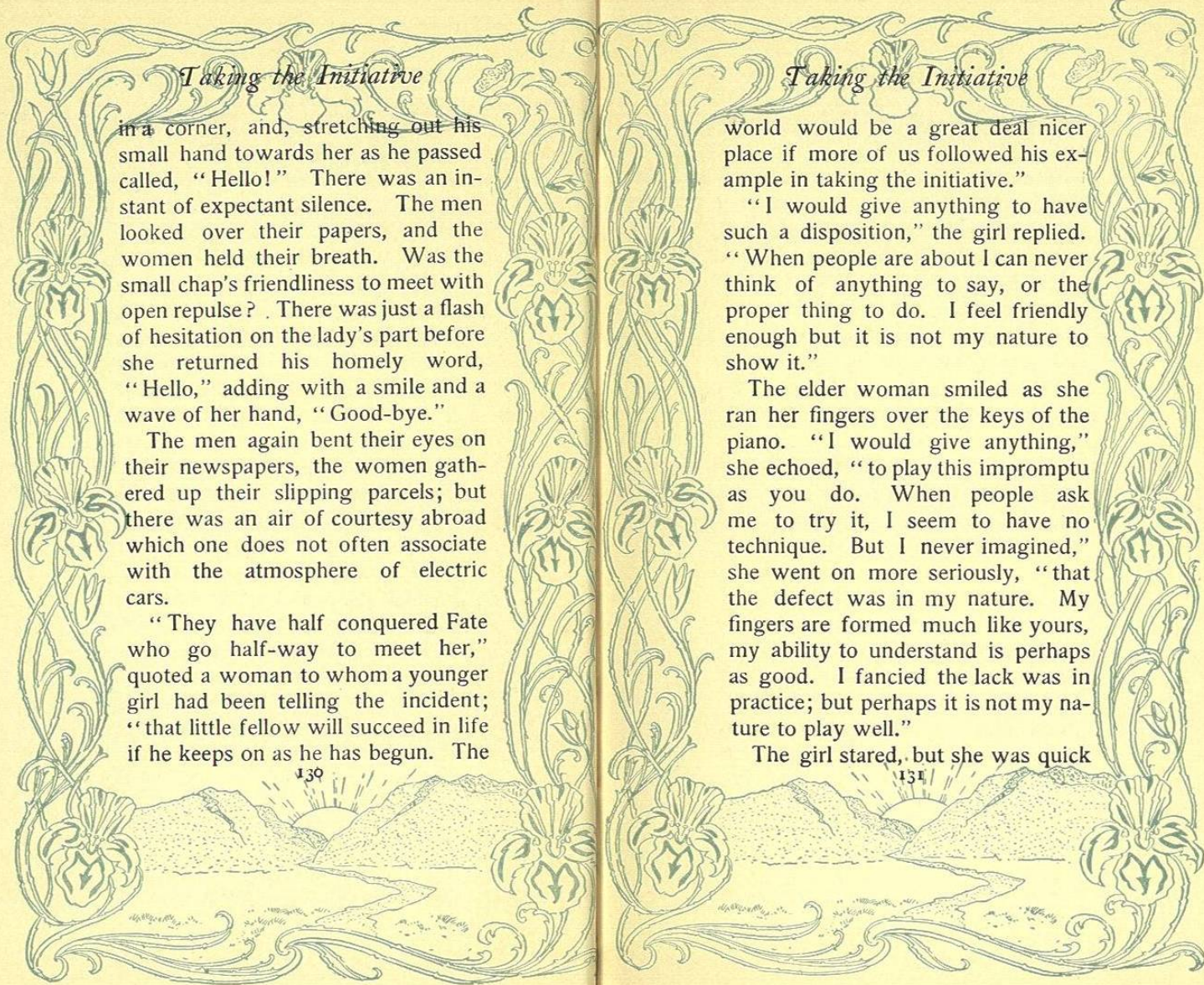
world would be a great deal nicer place if more of us followed his example in taking the initiative."

"I would give anything to have such a disposition," the girl replied. "When people are about I can never think of anything to say, or the proper thing to do. I feel friendly enough but it is not my nature to show it."

The elder woman smiled as she ran her fingers over the keys of the piano. "I would give anything," she echoed, "to play this impromptu as you do. When people ask me to try it, I seem to have no technique. But I never imagined," she went on more seriously, "that the defect was in my nature. My fingers are formed much like yours, my ability to understand is perhaps as good. I fancied the lack was in practice; but perhaps it is not my nature to play well."

The girl stared, but she was quick

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of comprehension. "Suppose I did not even feel friendly?" she asked.

"I believe in reflex action," replied her aunt. "I believe that when a person feels morose and moody, by putting on a brave smile and adopting a cheerful tone of voice her mood will actually change to match her expression; and in the same way persistence in doing small kindnesses will transform the coldest of us into women glowing with helpfulness and good cheer."

Does not this simple theory open up visions of active effort to many girls and women who, with or without "feeling friendly enough" have never learned the expression of their real selves? The way to take the initiative is simply to take it. There is always somebody to smile at, somebody in a corner to stretch out a hand to, some one to whom a book or a basket of flowers would be a boon, a letter an incentive to better

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achievement; and there is always that high table-land of endeavour pointed out by Lowell:

"Be noble; and the nobleness that lies
In other men, sleeping but never dead,
Will rise in majesty to meet thine own;
Then shalt thou see it gleam in many eyes,
Then will pure light about thy way be shed,
And thou wilt nevermore be sad or lone."

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SYMPATHETIC VIBRATIONS

XXV

"I WONDER why it is," Alice exclaimed, as she and the doctor neared the river, "that a great iron bridge like this should forbid a single horse and two little people to trot across?"

The doctor laughed. "It is not a case of a single horse and two little people. The bridge does not even notice us till we are half over, but before we leave it is all in a tremour. Teams just behind would pick up and augment our rapid vibrations to a dangerous degree." He reined up the horse beside two tall pine-trees. "Jump out and let us experiment."

Putting his thumbs against the trunk of one tree and Alice's against the other, he told her to push each time he counted. For ten counts the

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trees stood unyielding. At the eleventh there was a slight movement of the upper branches and at the thirteenth both trees were waving in unison.

If two clocks are placed on the same shelf and their pendulums adjusted to swing in exact unison, and one of them be set running, in the course of time the other will start up in sympathy. Each vibration of the active pendulum adds to the swing of the other, which, beginning in a very small way, increases until both are making their full stroke.

The violinist, Sarasate, once found his memory deserting him at a recital, but he discovered the reason of the mishap in time to prevent a failure. A lady was fanning herself in the front row of chairs. The violinist stopped playing. "Madame," he said, "how can I play in two-four time when you are beating six-eight?" The lady shut up her fan

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and the recital was concluded successfully.

All human intercourse may be said to be founded upon one of these two incidents. Either we help one another or we hinder.

Perhaps we have fanned our whims so long in six-eight time that we forget how many lovely melodies depend on two-four time. Or perhaps we have hung our pendulum of action so heedlessly that we can neither give an impulse to others nor catch the swing of their own.

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THE VALUE OF MONEY

XXVI

TWO attractive girls, evidently suburbanites, sat opposite me in the cars, and from their conversation which I could not help hearing my fancy easily followed them through the earlier hours of the day. One of them, in their tour of the shops, was continually saying, "How cheap this lace is!" "What a bargain in ribbons!" "This cloth is going for a song!" and the close of the day found her pocketbook depleted and her arms loaded with so-called bargains none of which exactly suited her. Her companion had spent no more money, but she had just the dress pattern that she desired, gloves of the exact shade that would be most serviceable, and a simple becoming hat of unmistakable "air."

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"Why is it," the younger girl exclaimed, almost in tears, "that you always get so much more for fifty dollars than I do?"

"Because," the other replied laconically, "I do not fritter."

One of the greatest benefits which redounds to the self-supporting girl is the proper appreciation of money. The girl who has fingered her typewriter all winter in order to spend her vacation at the seashore will be less likely to indulge in needless extravagances than the one who has taken a check from her father's ready hand. She knows by experience that some things are superficial and some are essential, and she saves on the one to spend on the other. She learns to sink trifles and know solid values; to plan at home what she is to buy, deciding definitely upon colour, material, quantity and price, and not allowing herself to fluctuate under the eloquence of the salesman. Above all

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she learns never to buy a thing merely because it is cheap. The gambling table is not a surer grave for a boy's money than the bargain counter for the girl's.

Of all Dickens's characters none exasperates the reader so much as Harold Skimpole. Handsome, accomplished, artistic, fascinating, he had no idea of the value of money. As he continually repeated, with a fervour which leads one to doubt his veracity, he was a child in shillings and pence. Therefore he let his wife and daughters go ragged, permitted his friends to pay his debts, and wore out his life in attitudinizing.

Far more lovable is Thackeray's Colonel Newcome, and yet Miss Mulock was emphatic in declaring that not for the world would she have Colonel Newcome for a father, uncle, husband or confidential friend. Why? Because he, like Harold Skimpole was deficient in the one

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point, the pivot upon which society turns, the right use and conscientious appreciation of money.

But is the average girl, who despises the weakness of these men, standing on a different plane? Is she making herself, day by day, more intelligent in the use of money? Does she know the exact amount of her income or allowance? Does she live within it? Is she punctilious in the keeping and balancing of accounts, and informed concerning receipts, checks and drafts? Or is she "only a girl" in the matter of money—thoughtless, wasteful, inconsiderate, rather proud of the fact that she is free-handed and above pecuniary consideration?

I once knew a girl so impressed with palmistry that she actually changed her character to conform to the lines in her hand. If these instances of the young shopper and the characters of fiction work in any

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girl reader a juster appreciation of the money line in her life's palm, they will not have been repeated here in vain.

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