

## Highways To Happiness

while you are young. As one crumbling stone may weaken a building, one wrong habit indulged may mar your life.

### 13. Man and His Books

MAN WAS the crowning work of God's creation, and the most important and interesting part of man is his mind. Of the millions of men in the world no two are alike. There are large men, small men, fat men, thin men. From the chin down man's size, shape, and avoirdupois are determined quite largely by what he eats and the exercise he takes.

The chief difference in men, however, is from the chin up. The size of a man from the chin up is determined by what gets into his brain by way of the five senses. One of the most potent factors in influencing our minds is our reading.

Tell me what a person eats and drinks, and I can tell you something of his physical future. Show me a young person's library, and although I am no prophet I will tell you something about his probable success.

Our complete stock of words is in the dictionary. We may read them and study them as they appear in their alphabetical order; and they serve the purpose of giving us information; but studied in that way, they do not affect our emotions very much. Those same words, however, can be arranged in such a way as to start a young person on a life of disobedience, lawbreaking, and crime. Let some men arrange them, and they will cause war and bloodshed. Let someone take the same dictionary and arrange the same words, and they will lead to a life of devotion, service, and self-sacrifice. It is important that we read the right books.

Pleading guilty to sixty charges of robbery while armed, four young men, all under twenty-two, confessed that they got their ideas from reading the Jesse James type of magazine.

Terms in the reformatory with lashes were meted out to three youthful gunmen. As the mothers of these boys saw them being led off to serve their sentences, they broke down and had to be assisted from the courtroom. The culprits told the judge that they had been avid readers of lurid crime fiction. If we read all the time, we would not have time to read a small fraction of the best books. Why, then, should we take our precious time to read that which is questionable?

What a privilege, what an opportunity, to be able to associate with the great and good of all ages through books! As I look back over my life I can think of nothing that has been of more help to me than good reading—the Bible; biography; books on travel, on nature, and on other informative and inspirational subjects.

John Ruskin said that whatever he had done in life worth while had been due to the fact that when he was a child his mother daily read him a part of the Bible, and made him learn a part of it by heart.

Henry Clay's mother, left a widow, had to earn the daily bread for her family by bending over the washtub. It was hard work, but she saved every penny possible and bought books for her son. Through these books he associated with the leaders, the learned, and the geniuses of every age. He went to school in a log-cabin schoolhouse, where indifferent teachers did little to help him. But his mother's sacrifice brought education to his home in the form of the best books.

Dickens declared that he might have been a hardened criminal or a sneaking cut-throat had he not learned as a child in the slums of London to read the great masterpieces of literature.

#### READING

All that Mankind has done, thought, gained or been. It is lying as in magic preservation in the pages of  
Books.

CARLYLE

Books are the monuments of vanished minds.  
Sir William DAVENANT

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It is chiefly through books that we enjoy intercourse with superior minds, and these invaluable means of communication are in the reach of all. In the best books, great men talk to us, give us their most precious thoughts, and pour their souls into ours.

CRANNING

Without a love for books the richest man is poor.

Author Unknown

Reading is to the mind, what exercise is to the body. As by the one, health is preserved, strengthened, and invigorated; by the other, virtue, which is the health of the mind, is kept alive, cherished, and confirmed.

ADDISON

He that loves reading has everything within his reach. He has but to desire, and he may possess himself of every species of wisdom to judge and power to perform.

WILLIAM GODWIN

One day while still studying in London, Mohandas Gandhi sauntered into a bookstall and purchased a little book which he said directed the course of his whole life. Livingstone used his first week's wage to buy a book. One of Edison's biographers said that between trains one always knew where to find Edison. He would usually busy himself in the Detroit public library, bravely attempting to read each section shelf by shelf. The great Daniel Webster said, "If there is anything in my style or thought to commend, the credit is due to my kind parents' instilling into my mind an early love for the Scriptures." The men and women who read are the men and women who will lead their fellow men.

Someone has said that he would not worry about who made the laws of our nation if he could edit the newspapers of the country, for newspaper reading is the chief source of information for millions of Americans.

Lincoln, the rail splitter, might have been just a day laborer in Illinois had he not had contact with good books in the formative years of his life. As a boy he walked twenty miles to borrow a book, after having read the books in his home library—the Bible, "Pilgrim's Progress", "Robinson Crusoe," "Aesop's Fables," a history of the United States, and Weem's "Life of Washington."

A prisoner in jail wrote the following letter, which warns against reading bad books and degrading magazines. "I was born of honest, respectable, Christian parentage. At an early age I laid the foundation for what I have become—an inmate of a county jail, awaiting trial upon a charge likely to send me to the state prison for fifteen years—all through acquiring a taste for pernicious books and papers.

"Dime novels were my special delight. As I grew older I acquired the friendship of vicious boys and men, and was acquainted with all kinds of vice, though I did not partake of it. I condoned it until I became so familiar with it that it lost all its hideousness to me. This familiarity led me on step by step, until now I see before me the felon's garb at the expiration of a few short weeks.

"Boys, ponder over this. A gray-haired father, delicate, praying mother, brought to the verge of an untimely grave by the bad doings of their only and well-beloved son I Boys, I implore you, read not the accursed, vicious literature of the day. It will steal away your manhood, your truthfulness, your self-control, and leave you a floating wreck upon the sea of life, like a ship without a rudder or a sail, until you commit some crime and repent when it is too late, as I am doing.

"I beg you, boys, by your fathers, your praying mothers, your loving sisters, never let one drop of liquor pass your lips. Think over what I have said, and take warning by my example. Take this for a motto: Let cards and liquor alone, be in bed by 10 p.m. and up at 6 a.m., eat regularly, sleep soundly, exercise moderately, pray constantly, and you will never be behind the bars.

"Respectfully yours,  
"PRISONER!"

Erasmus, the leader of the renaissance of learning in Northern Europe, sold his clothing to buy books. Carey read Cook's voyages, and was inspired to give his life to missions. Lincoln read the life of Henry Clay, and this book colored his life. Von Hindenburg, military genius, said, "Since my days as a cadet I have never read a book that did not deal with military affairs!"

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the young man Timothy, he mentioned to him the matter of his

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reading: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine!" I Timothy 4: 12, 13.

Thousands of books and millions of pages of magazines are coming from our presses each year. They are all being read, of course. Some are popular, and-in constant demand. Some are smut and literary garbage. Some are educational, inspirational, and uplifting. Which shall we read? Our choice will have much to do with our usefulness, our outlook on life, our success, and our eternal destiny. We cannot afford to read anything but the very best, lest we come short of our best.

### 14. We Are Not Machines

DO YOU EVER talk to yourself? "NO," you quickly answer; "it is only old people who talk to themselves!"

Maybe so. Not long ago I was leaving a store when an elderly gentleman passed me going in. I heard him say, "I'm going to get me a good cup of tea."

Do you ever talk to inanimate objects? Have you imagined they were alive? I have heard people doing this; in fact, I shall have to plead guilty myself.

I talked one day to a monster railroad engine. The Continental Limited had stopped at lovely Jasper Park, up on the edge of the Canadian Rockies. It is a division point where the train gets a careful checking over before it starts across the mountains. I got off for a bit of fresh air and exercise, and with the curiosity of most men I wandered down to see the engine. It was a powerful giant.

I stood in wonder looking over this mass of steel, wheels, dynamos, and gadgets. It was all ready for the climb up the steep mountain slopes. The throbbing of the idling motors of the great mogul gave it the aspect of a panting monster eager to be on its way. There were thirteen heavy steel coaches behind it-a real load for the steep grades ahead. I admired that engine. It fascinated me to think of the incalculable power it possessed. Man seemed so puny beside it, and yet it was useless without his control.

I suppose I did not talk aloud to it, but I did do some talking under my breath. "You are a powerful giant," I said. "There is almost no limit to what you can move. You are soon going to pull this long, heavy train away from this station with apparent ease. But just a little way down the track, Mr. Engine, you are coming to a switch!" I had been over the road many times before, and I knew there was a fork in the road there. "And big as you are, powerful as you may be, you will be just a machine when you come to this switch. You cannot decide which way you will take. You must go the way puny man has determined you must go. A mere man will throw that switch, and you will go south to Vancouver or north to Prince Rupert, as he may choose to send you. I think I would rather be a mere person with the power to choose my course." Then I heard a familiar "All aboard," and I hurried back to my sleeper, confident that this great giant of the rails could pull us up over the rugged Rockies and down to the quiet shores of the Pacific.

Some people wonder why God did not make us to run in a certain groove, so that we could not go wrong, and would have to do right. I have heard people wish they were like a machine, so they could go but one way.

Only today I heard a mother saying to a lively, wiggling one year-old, "Don't touch that, sonny boy. It is hot; it will burn you. He seemed to doubt it and would slide up close to the stove, eyeing his mother and saying, "Hot, hot, hot." He had come to the time when he must begin to make choices. He could touch the stove and get burned, and he perhaps would do it at least once, or he could believe his mother and stay away from it.

Every day, yes, in almost every waking hour of our lives, there will be choices for us to make. Always before us will be the two ways-the narrow, uphill road and the broad, downward way. Our destination will be decided by the way we choose when we come to the fork in the road. The switch at Jasper, though but a small piece of steel, could send the train north or south to destinations hundreds of miles apart.

Sometimes two roads are so close together at the fork that it seems it cannot possibly matter much which one we take. As we travel on, however, these two roads get farther and farther apart. At the end of