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CONSIDER THE LILIES.



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CONSIDER THE LILIES.

I WANT to preach a sermon to everybody, from the text, "Consider the lilies of the field," because it has nothing in it disagreeable to anybody. It is not a sermon of threat or of warning, but of hope. The world to-day needs more hope. We are a hopeless lot. We are so, principally, because in so much of the past preaching we have been told how bad we are, and what would happen to us if we kept on in our badness. We are so little told that we have in us lots of goodness and power. We have been bad, largely because so many ministers have thought badly of us, and have so made us think badly of ourselves. People who think badly of themselves are pretty sure to do badly. Scripture remarks, "As a man or woman thinketh, so is he or she." It is when a man thinks poorly of himself, that he goes off and gets drunk, or does some mean thing. The pride that makes a man value himself is the pride that keeps from mean and degraded acts. Our race is now on the point of being woke up to the fact that every man and every woman are the possessors of more powers than now they dream of, and that, when they know how to use these powers, they will steer out of all evil into good. A lily, or any other plant or flower, grows

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and beautifies itself under the laws of the universe just as much as man or woman ; and a man or woman grows and has grown all through the countless ages under such laws, just as much as the lily.

It is a grand mistake,— that of supposing that any man or woman of ordinary sense is the result of this one short life we live here. We have all lived, possibly, in various forms,—as animal, bird, snake, insect, plant. Our starting point of matter in existence has been dragged on the sea's bottom, embedded in icebergs, and vomited out of volcanoes amid fire, smoke, and ashes. It has been tossed about on the ocean, and lain, maybe, for centuries on centuries embedded in the heart of some post-pliocene mountain. We've crept up and crept up, sometimes in one form, sometimes in another, always gaining something more in intelligence, something more of force, by each change, until at last here we are, and we haven't got far along yet. The lily has a life of its own and an intelligence of its own. You may differ with me here, and I expect you to do so. Most people think intelligence is confined to human beings, and every thing that looks like it in an animal or plant to be "instinct," or some other name for nothing in particular. I believe that intelligence is as common as air, only in some forms of life there's a great deal more of it than in others. Man, of all the growths of the earth, has the most of this article packed away in him. That is, he has the most of the article we call "thought" packed away in him. Thought is a highly rarefied and powerful substance, unseen and unfelt by the outer sense. The more of this article possessed by any one, the more

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there is of life in him or her. Thinking people live the longest. I don't mean by thinking people, literary people or bookworms. Of the worms, many of them don't think at all. They live on the thoughts of others. By thinking people, I mean those who are always getting fresh, original thought out of themselves. That kind of life or thought (these being convertible terms) renews body and mind.

The lily has intelligence enough to start itself out of the seed when put in the ground and called upon by the sun to do so, as a man or woman has the same intelligence (or should have) to go out in the sun on a pleasant day, and absorb the life and power sent in by the sun. Those who do not, who remain five-sixths of the time in-doors, are, as a result, weak and bleached like potato-vines growing in a cellar. The lily has also sense enough to grow in the sun. If you put it in a room, it will grow toward that part of the room where the light enters. That is simply because it wants the light: it knows it needs it, and it goes after what it needs, because it knows, or rather feels, that the light is good for it. We go after food for precisely the same reason, only we call our action the result of intelligence. The plant's action we call instinct. A man goes to the fire to warm himself because he feels the fire to be good for him. It is pleasant to feel it on a cold day. A cat lies in the sun for the same reason. But the man calls his feeling "intelligence," and the cat's or plant's feeling "instinct." Where's the difference? Where the lily gets ahead of us with its limited life and intelligence is, that it does not concern itself or

worry about the morrow. It toils not. It takes of water, air, sunshine, and whatever of the elements are in these, just what it needs for the minute, the hour, or the day, just so much and no more. It doesn't go to work laying up an extra supply of water or air or sunshine for to-morrow, fearing it may be out of these supplies, as we toil and spin in laying up extra dollars against the poverty we fear. If it did, it would use up all its force in heaping up these extra supplies, and would never become a perfect lily to outshine Solomon in all his glory.

The robes of a lily, a rose, or any blossom are in beauty, fine texture, and delicacy beyond any thing that human art can produce. It is a living beauty while it does live. Our fine laces and silks are relatively of a dead beauty. They commence decaying or fading just as soon as finished. Up to its highest blossoming point the lily's beauty is always increasing. A cloth that would shine with a lustre to-morrow more vividly than to-day, and that would show similar variations of texture, would be eagerly sought for, even though it lasted but a fortnight, and the extravagant people, who really keep the mills going and the money in circulation, and pay the best for the best things, would have it. If the lily, with its limited intelligence, worried and fretted for fear the sun might not shine to-morrow, or that there might be no water, or money in the house, or potatoes in the cellar, it would surely become a cast-down, forlorn-looking flower. It would expend the strength in worrying that it needs for gathering and assimilating to itself the elements it requires to become a lily.

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If any degree of mind or intelligence so worries and takes on itself burdens beyond the needs of the day, it will cut itself off from the power of attracting to itself what it does really need for the growth, the health, the strength, and the prosperity of to-day. I mean here just what I say, and that in no metaphorical, allegorical, or figurative sense. I mean, that as the lily's limited intelligence, or mind force if you please, when not burdened or taxed about something that concerns to-morrow, draws to itself the elements that it needs for to-day, exactly so would human minds unburdened with woe or anxiety attract to themselves all that was needed for the hour. The needs of the hour are the only real needs. You need your breakfast in the morning; you do not need to-morrow morning's breakfast. Yet nine out of ten among us are directly or indirectly worrying in some way about to-morrow morning's breakfast, and so subtracting from ourselves more or less of the strength necessary to enjoy, digest, and assimilate this morning's breakfast.

Exactly as the unburdened, unfretted, unworried lily attracts power to grow and clothe itself with beauty from the elements about it, exactly so does the unworried, unfretted human mind attract to itself a thousand times more of what is necessary to carry out its plans and relieve its happiness. You lose that power the moment you commence to fret. I mean, here, power to carry on any kind of business, from preaching up to street-sweeping. Every man of business knows that he is in the best condition to do business when his mind can fix itself on

the one plan, and shut out every thing else. Every artist knows that he does his best work when his mind is wholly fixed, concentrated, and absorbed in the work of the minute. Because then it is able to use all its power, and, what is more, it is drawing then to itself more of power, and what is ever so attracting it is fastening to itself forever. I hear you say, "I can't help worrying. Times are hard, wages low, living high; the family's large, they must be housed, bed and clothed, and this is on my mind day and night. You talk of not worrying under such circumstances. It's all nonsense." You see, my friend, I have tried to give you the full force of your objection. If you want more, you may call me hard names in addition. It is all nonsense, too, to say you can't stop worrying, at least for the present. But that makes no difference as to the result,—the loss of power through fretting, the actual damage to health, the weakening of mind through worry, the aging of the body, and, worse than all, the loss or cutting-off from yourself of the mind's attractive power, which, if allowed free operation like the lily's, would give you all that you can enjoy for the day, because you can enjoy but just so much for the day, though you have, or think you have, ten thousand times more. A man can eat and enjoy but one dinner at a time, though he has money enough to buy a thousand.

If you are in a crowd rushing in a panic you must go with the rest and perhaps be crushed. Life as now lived by thousands is as a crowd panic-stricken by fear of coming to want, or fear of something or other. Any fear from any cause brings loss of power.

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I don't say that people ought to stop worrying. There is no such word as "ought" in my dictionary. People can't help worrying. The habit is born with us. Our ancestors for generations have worried before us. But that makes no difference as to the destructive results of "taking thought for the morrow." The law involved goes on working. It is merciless in its working. It is as certain to run over and crush you if you get in its way, as is the locomotive if you step before it on the track. The best way is to take advantage of the law, and get on the right side of it. How? Think hopeful things instead of hopeless things. Think success instead of failure. Why, the habit of thinking hopeless, disagreeable things is so confirmed up here in New England, that if you remark, "Its a fine day," half of these grouchy, croaking old shellbacks will growl, "Yes, but it is one of your — weather breeders." Just so sure as the universe is governed by fixed and immutable law, just so sure will that law be found to read, "If you think bright things, you attract bright things to you. If you think dark things, you cut off the invisible wires with the bright things, and you make instantaneous connection with the 'ground circuit' attracting dark things." Perhaps you say this is simple or childish. Now, what is simple in this universe? The sprouting of a seed is called by some a simple affair. But nobody knows the real cause of its sprouting. It is only known, if you put it in the ground, where it can have a certain amount of the sun's warmth and some moisture, it will sprout. The rising and falling of a tea-kettle's cover over the fire gave Watts his

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first idea of the mighty force of steam. That is, he got there his first hint of the power in steam, or rather behind steam. That is heat. But then there is a power behind heat. What's that? Don't know. Simplicity, indeed! What in the world is there so simple?

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