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VADE MECUM, VOLVENTIBUS ANNIS

THE MAYANS
SAN ANTONIO,
TEXAS

Degree 8 - 9

Number 163

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Reaching for the Stars

Mayan Lesson Number 163

THE REACH AND THE GRASP

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REACHING FOR THE STARS

Beloved Centurion:

This is the second in the series which we have called REACHING FOR THE STARS. It is entitled THE REACH AND THE GRASP. We feel that it is extremely important and that if you will follow the instructions given in the following pages it can be a turning point in your search for a better life, a fuller life, a more productive life, particularly if you have reached a place where you find it difficult to carry out plans which you have made mentally.

Remember that everytime you overcome an obstacle which is standing in the way of your good desires you are stronger for having done so. And, once you have overcome an obstacle, you find it easier to master the next one. If you are going along the line of least resistance, you are slipping back, and every time you slip back it is easier to lose your footing and go further down the path. There is no such thing as reaching a plateau and staying there. You must go one way or the other. This lesson is designed to inspire you to lift yourself, to help you to know it is possible to overcome obstacles. Always keep in mind that out of difficulties grow miracles.

Never permit the attitude of "What's the use?" to permeate your being. That state of mind is one of the greatest enemies to success and progress, and it is very easy to let yourself fall into this negative way of life. Never feel that your goal is too far beyond you for the more powerful the obstacle, the more glory we have mastering it.

Remember we never know what is just around the corner, waiting for us, and we never will know if we do not remain constantly alert, - always looking for ways and means to accomplish those things which we have dreamed of, but have given up as inaccessible.

Here is a thought to keep in mind which should give you strength in your endeavors to improve your lot in life. Difficulties are God's errands, and when we go upon these errands, we should think of them as proof of God's confidence in us. God is truly complimenting us when He sends us upon these errands of life. With God as your Partner, you cannot fail.

And now our prayer:

Heavenly Father, I am seeking the Way of Life
in its fulness.
Make me completely alive, and help me to express
that completeness in what I am and what I do.

Amen.

G R O W B Y O V E R - R E A C H I N G



WISE line from Robert Browning reads, "The reach must exceed the grasp, or what's a heaven for?" Even heaven is attained by trying things that are too much for us at first. Josiah Gilbert Holland says we build a ladder by which we rise heavenward, by which he no doubt meant the same thing.

A bird grows wings to fit the flight it attempts. The body grows muscles to fit the climb it tries. The soul grows capacities for what it has the daring to undertake.

If we never lifted anything heavier than we have already lifted we would never become any stronger. If we never learned anything more than we already know we would never become any wiser. If we never attempted anything we have not proved we can do we would never become any more capable. If we never reached for anything a little beyond us we would never grasp anything more than we already have. To those content with the minimum the maximum is forever out of reach.

It may seem foolish to say we should keep reaching for things a little beyond our grasp, but just the same that is the way we accomplish and attain the success and happiness that makes life a rich and rewarding experience.

Do you suppose the noted strong man began by lifting those tremendous weights the first day? Never. Do you think he attained his strength without ever trying what he could not do? No, he kept reaching a little beyond himself until he could do it. Each time he succeeded he stepped up the load a little.

That is the way to build strength of body. It is also the way to build strength of mind, soul, and purpose. Almost any mind has the capacity to be strong. If it is not strong, it is usually because it has never reached beyond its grasp until it has grasped what it supposed it could never reach. Some of the greatest minds have started life with very little in their favor, except the will to reach.

This is also the way to develop strength of character. It is done by always requiring of one's self a little more than ever before. The will that demands but little of itself attains but little. Any condition or habit that softens us or makes life too easy causes our natures to grow weak and flabby.

This is also the way to develop strong abilities. What any skilled person can do today would have been far beyond possibility for him when he began. He kept reaching for the unattainable, and gradually it became the attainable.

In the marketplace of life the best is as cheap as the poorest. Moreover

one's best is as attainable as his poorest is. This is so because every effort made increases the power to accomplish the aim in mind. Why bother with the fruit you know you can reach? You can have that anytime. Why not reach for the unattainable? You may miss it today, but some day you will grasp it.

S T R E T C H



In its silent way a star speaks to us in very plain and simple language. It is like a parent reaching a strong hand down where the weak hand of a child has to reach up to grasp it, and saying to our minds, hearts, wills, and aspirations alike, "Stretch".

In any gymnasium are german horses and parallel bars for pushing, dumb bells, indian clubs, and wands for manipulating, weights for lifting, and swinging bars and rings for stretching. Every time one reaches up and swings his weight on his arms he stretches himself a little. Each time one makes an effort at anything he is surprised at what he can do that he never thought he could do. That is the benefit stretching arms, understanding, wills, abilities, or souls, affords us.

It has other benefits, too. It makes us taller. Our growth in youth is a natural process of stretching. Any reaching upward for things makes us taller and therefore more nearly able to lay hold of them. Our weight is always pulling us down, but our reach is always pulling us up. An aspiration, like a star, stretches our minds upward and challenges us to our ever-rising best.

Reach your hand up for a star, and you will find it beyond your grasp; but your arm will be a little longer and a little stronger. Reach down for a clod, and you will find you can do it very easily. You missed your star, but you gained a longer reach. You gained your clod, and what have you to show for it? A lump of dirt. Take your choice of efforts and the values they get you. One effort has taught you to look up, the other to stoop down. You will always be a little better acquainted with either the stars or the clay.

We build our physical stature by assimilating food, but we build our life stature by reaching for stars. When we reach for stars with our thoughts we become astronomers of the soul. We think God's thoughts after Him, and grow into the vastness of their scope.

Have you striven for some worthwhile goal and not quite reached it? The effort was not lost, for you have stretched the muscles of your will. The next time you try you will come nearer. Some day you will attain it. Then you will start reaching for another and higher one. That is the way we grow.


Too many people stand looking at the worthless things they hold in their hands, asking why they do not have something better. The answer is easy. It is because they did not reach for it.

Others may stand empty-handed because they reached for stars and missed. Yet they are now stronger, taller-souled people, who are nearer their aspirations.

They have covered distance and grown stronger. They have lost interest in clods and baubles because they have reached for stars.

In other words, they are on their way to the best in life - power, understanding, harmony with the universe - all that helps us find and possess the most satisfying values life has to offer.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE ORDINARY

 HERE is abroad today a philosophy of the ordinary. We hear it constantly applied to every possible kind of thing. Its idea is to keep all the standards of life within easy reach. Attempt only what you know you can do, it says; try only the hills you know you can climb.

This is a static idea. It looks only to a fixed altitude, a rigid horizon. To follow it would mean that one would never get beyond what he is and what he can do now. In fact, he would slip back, because it is the general human tendency to be easy with ourselves. That is why the path of Mayanry leads ever onward and upward which is the only path of progress.

The coming of Jesus Christ into the world was a final answer to all such notions. There was a feeling abroad that the law and the prophets set too high a standard for people to live up to, and that Godlikeness was out of human reach. It could not be done. The God of whom they heard was too perfect. No one could be like Him. There is no such thing as a standard that is too high - we can always reach a little higher.

The life of Jesus was a demonstration that the excellence demanded by the law and the prophets was not only attainable, but that it was possible to go far beyond them. A perfect God was possible, flesh and blood could be godly, and a man could be strong enough to die for his ideals as well as to live for them.

Jesus was able to do all that because there was nothing negative about Him. He was the everlasting Yea and Amen, the One whose life was an unfailing Yes. He shrank from nothing, and He failed at nothing. That is what it takes. To such a spirit nothing is impossible.

We never know what we can do till we try, and we may not know even then. To attempt an impossible thing and fail is no reason for giving up. The attempt today may have made it possible tomorrow, and repeated attempts may in time make it possible to go far beyond it. The reach will not always exceed the grasp. It will not always even be limited by it.

The telephone, the motor car, the radio, the X-ray, are all former impossibilities that have been made possible because there were courageous souls who were not afraid to attempt the impossible. They proved anew that to everything worthwhile in life and nature there is a door, and that to every door there is a key. That key is never found by people who believe in attempting only the things they know they can do.

To attempt only what is easy is waste. All the things that looked

possible have already been done. The only fields left for pioneering are the apparently impossible ones. You will have to try there, if at all, if you have already worked out all the easy problems in your life. If you do try there, and do it conscientiously, you may reclassify some impossibility as a possibility.

If you are not prepared to make some new and great invention or discovery, why let that stop you? There are two miracles you can begin producing right now and right where you are. One is a high-grade life, and one is an unselfish service of some kind. And it so happens that these are the very things the world always needs. But do not expect it to be attained by ordinary efforts. Reach beyond your arm's length, and keep reaching.

THE BARRIER OF THE USUAL



WHATEVER your project is, you must get beyond the barrier of the usual. People are always seeking novelty, but too often it is destructive novelty. Too many seem to think unless a thing is reckless, it is not novel. That is not true.

More variety is possible in the realm of what is good, and wholesome, and helpful, than in that of the evil, the unwholesome, and the hurtful. The field of wrong is limited, for it does not take much of it to wreck one. The field of good is infinite, because it is the path of growth.

Don't worry about being in a rut, but only about what you do in that rut. All progress is made by traveling roads, and every road is a rut. One who does not have a good rut to travel in is likely to go afield. The land traveler who gets out of his way gets lost, and the mariner who gets off of his course runs onto the rocks.

The trouble is not being in a rut, for all programs and customs are ruts. The trouble is getting stuck in it. Even a rut is a road on, and if we do not go on we will not arrive. One can do that whether he is in a rut or not. We do it when we quit trying. When we lose the questing spirit we lose the sense of our objective.

Of course, if you find you are in the wrong rut get out of it just as quickly as you can. But don't just ramble over the field to nowhere. Get yourself another rut, but be sure it is the right one, the one that leads where you want to go. Everyone who ever achieved anything was in a rut. Straight is the gate and narrow is the way. But remember, when you have done all this you have not arrived anywhere; you have only gotten ready to start.

The roads of improvement and achievement do not afford much latitude. They are not very wide, but they are very long. They were not built for straying, but for keeping ahead.

Do you ever stop to think what it is that gives us the well known feeling of bafflement and boredom? It is getting stuck on the road. As long as one is there the scene never changes, but if he gets his feet out of the clay and goes on


the change of scene is quick and constant.

The idea here is to make something of the journey through the years, and not to let it be just the same old thing. Keep within the limits of the constructive, but be original. Have ideas. Do something unusual. Stop just imitating patterns already fashioned and work out some new ones on your own account.

Do not do this to halt your progress, but to accelerate it; not to cut yourself off from your goal, but to reach it. Realizing, like Columbus, that there must be a new way to something better, find and try that way.

A pioneer is one who finds a way to do something important. Assured that it is good, he dares to follow it. Can you not be that brave in building a life?

THE BARRIER OF INEXPERIENCE

 HE unusual effort that will open the way to a new life for you may be, and very likely is, something you have never done. That should not halt you. If it is a good thing, and you are in earnest about it, that should recommend it.

The world is full of people who are tired, and have worked hard without much result, and have lost interest. Are they not people who have just gone on year after year doing the same old thing in the same old way? Are they not people who by now could have built charming lives and lovely worlds for themselves?

Can you remember a time when you decided to stop hesitating and repair the roof, or paint the house, or decorate your room, or start a library, or begin really using the one you have, or something else? Do you remember how it brightened the world for you and how much better you felt for having gotten at it? If it was something you never tried before, do you remember the sense of victory it gave you?

Why not do the same thing for your life? We let our lives, and manners, and stores of knowledge, and keenness of understanding, and relations with others, wait on our neglect or fall into disrepair, too. Then there are all the new possibilities you have never tried. What a challenge they are to put some novelty into your life! Examine your own life and be honest with yourself. Are you contented, or are you reaching for the stars?

Many older people regain much of the thrill and vigor of youth by renewing their interest in the world and living in it. Thus they regain the notice of what is going on and of the people around them, and their lives stop going to seed.

Has life begun to grow stale on your hands? It will if you let your interest in things and people begin to sag. You can prevent it by setting up a new and challenging goal for yourself. Master a new excellence or improve on an old one. That will put the sparkle back into things.

Why not attempt something you have never done before? You may have a


dormant skill. There may be a branch of knowledge for which you have an undiscovered genius. Work at it at home, or go back to school.

What about a new and deeper interest in religion? Why not make a more complete and adequate study of the Bible? People who have given it another and more thoughtful reading have always found, even in advanced years, that it carried a yet deeper charm and inspiration. It really becomes something new, as new vistas are opened to the understanding.

The older we grow the more we need and are helped by a growing practice of prayer and a more definite personal acquaintance with the Infinite One. And a prime necessity in the possession of faith is the practice of it. Why not attempt some new program of helpfulness in the Master's name?

There are within reach all kinds of new departures you could make that would brighten the world, renew life's charm and wonder, and make your own existence of greater worth to yourself as well as to others. They are accomplished by waking up and going on, and one of the best formulas for that is to undertake some worthwhile things you have never done before. That is what the explorer, the scientist, the inventor, and the thinker does, and each enriches his life as he enriches the life of the world.

THE BARRIER OF OPINION

OU must not only be courageous enough to undertake what you have never done before, and did not suppose you could do; but you must get past one of the most negative forces we have to contend with in life, namely the negative attitudes of other people. If you get anywhere you will have to accomplish things no one else seems to think you are capable of doing.

If no one ever got beyond the crowd's estimate of him this would be a sorry world. It is surprising how numerous is the wet blanket squad, and how nearly always it is mistaken in its judgment. We must learn to believe in ourselves in spite of such discouragements, and we must be brave enough to put that confidence into action.

You may resolve not to be baffled by the discouraging voices of others, and for awhile you may succeed, but there is a point at which discouraging attitudes are almost certain to begin affecting you and wearing you down unless you fortify yourself very thoroughly, which is the purpose of this word of caution.

In the first place, it is not usually wise to talk about your purposes until they are accomplished. You may confide in a choice friend or a trusted loved one, but you may not meet with encouragement even there, and even they may spread the matter abroad. If anyone else is personally involved consult that one, but in most matters of achievement or self-improvement, it is your concern alone.

Even if you need to seek the advice of some trusted person, have a care. Even that person may discourage you. If he does, try to see his viewpoint, for he might be right. Consider his advice carefully and objectively, and if you are


honestly convinced you are on the right road there is nothing to do but follow it. The wisest counselor may advise you, but he cannot take the place of God.

Beyond these possible exceptions keep your own counsel. If you start shouting your dreams from the housetops depend on it, someone will be throwing cold water on the flame within the hour. Some are thoughtless, some are jealous, and some are simply negative-minded. Whatever they are, they can play havoc with your courage and self-confidence. Better not trust yourself to be strong-minded enough not to be disturbed. People like that have worn down some of the strongest wills before you came along.

Your Instructor believes there is abroad a spirit of destructiveness which we call Satan, and which works on the hearts and minds of people undermining their courage and destroying their confidence and faith. Its favorite strategy is to catch people in their weak moments and persuade them that they are not strong enough to do right or to make the most and best of themselves. Some stand ready to help accomplish this wicked purpose.

Don't let it happen. Think of those who have won their victories in spite of adverse comments. Make others believe in you by believing in yourself.

U N R E A C H E D L E V E L S

 YOU must not only be willing to attempt what you have never done before, and what the bystanders do not think you can do, but you must not be afraid to undertake what no one has ever done before. What progress has ever been made by doing what has already been done, scaling pinnacles that have already been reached, and copying pages that have already been written?

No distance is to be gained by just stepping in the tracks others have made before us. It is good, as a matter of experience, to follow these tracks till we reach the point where they go no farther. But what then?

Shall we say this is as far as others before us have gone, and that is good enough for us? Is it enough merely to be proud to have done as well as the best up to this time?

You might be content with that, but the race will not be. History will not be, and God will not be. God began working with this slow and wayward planet ages ago. He has made wonderful progress with it, but just the same He is still going on from good to better, and from better to best. It takes more than precedent to satisfy Him.

God has had to do much of His work through human beings of this and other generations. It will always be so. He needs to accomplish some part of the present part of His plan through you. St. Paul was in dead earnest when he wrote that we are workers together with God.

The possibilities are limitless. There is nowhere to stop. When we follow the tracks of those who have preceded us as far as they go, we know we have

caught up. That is the time to press on and make some tracks of our own. Remember too that others will be coming on to inherit from you tracks that will guide them still farther up the road.

Abraham attempted a journey no one ever made before and made possible important historical developments that are taking place today. Pasteur attempted prophylaxis no one had ever dared before, and dulled the claws of deadly and devastating disease. The Wright Brothers attempted flights till then thought impossible, and gave man wings. Jesus attempted pinnacles of living till then considered out of reach, and proved to mankind that it could be done.

None of these things would ever have been accomplished if the people who did them had measured their possibility by whether they had ever been done before. They demonstrated the truth of the principle that the thing that ought to be done can be done. For the most important things done in any generation there are no precedents, nor for the most important things we do in our personal lives.

The road stretches before you, and it reaches far. There are footprints ahead, but they do not go all the way. When you come to where the road is trackless you will not have reached the goal for you and those to come later. Only the distance gained beyond that will be your contribution to the destiny of mankind or to the really unusual part of your own. To that point everything is prologue. There the real story begins.

M E D I T A T I O N

I do not pause at the last footprint of those who have gone before, but press on to make for others such a trail as these have made for me.

YOUR CLASS INSTRUCTOR.