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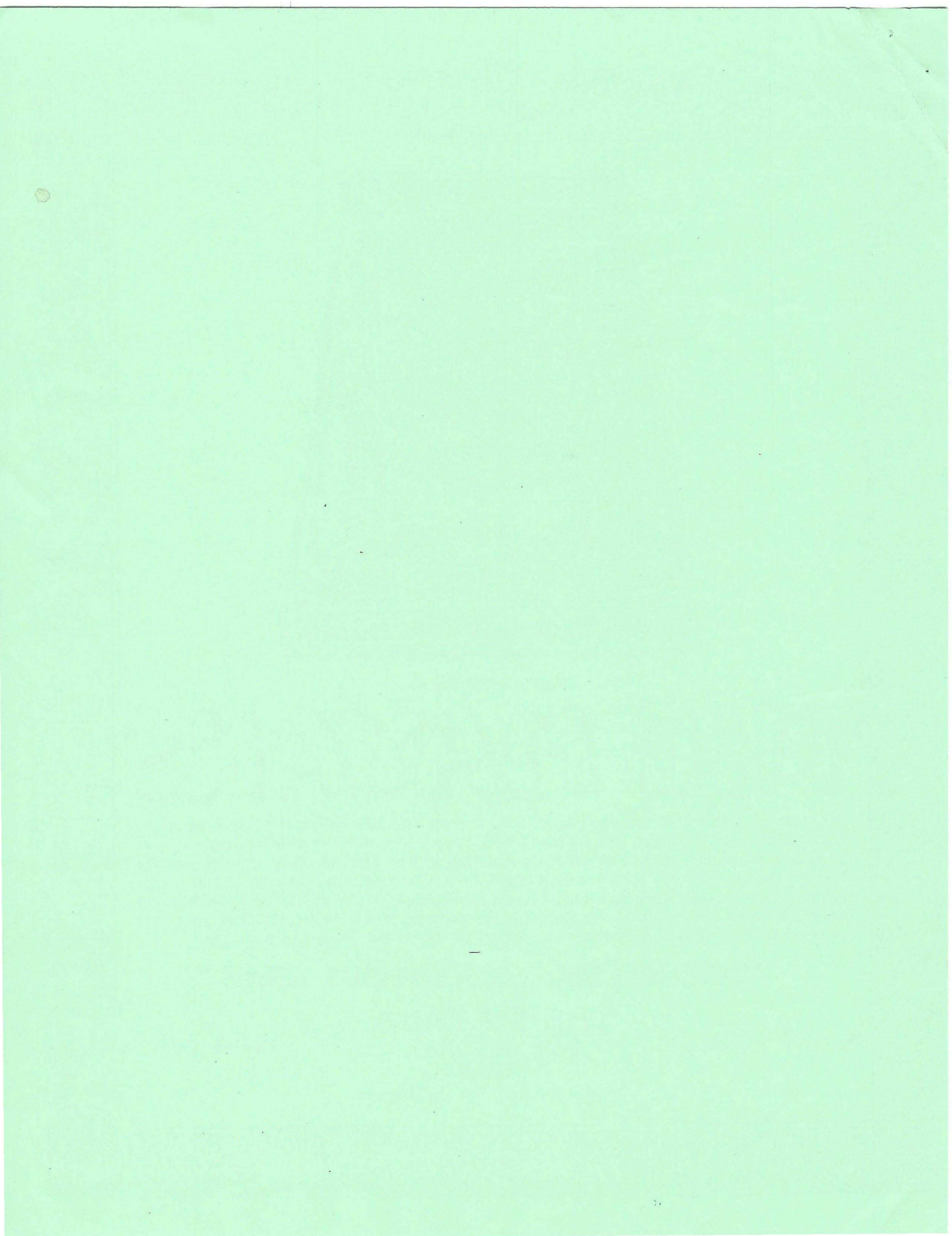
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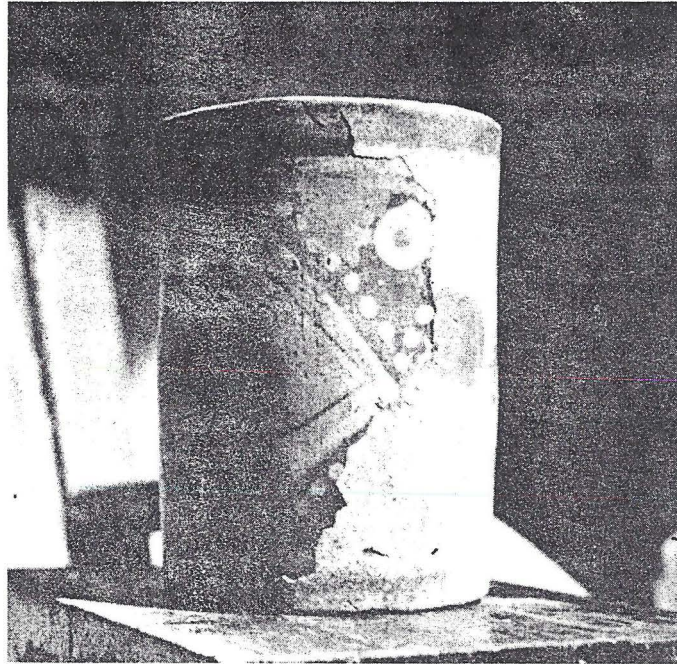
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MARRED VESSELS

MAYAN REVELATION NUMBER 204

The Marred Vessel

It Is Never Too Late

We Are All Potters

Appraise Your Efforts

Other Marred Vessels

Never Lose Heart

The Larger View



BELOVED CENTURION:

This lesson is a special lesson - not one of a series, but one that I feel is needed at this time. You will notice the title is "Marred Vessels".

There is a time, or times, in the lives of all of us when the clay with which we are working in our lives - namely, our purposes and objectives - fail to follow the perfect pattern we have planned for them. In other words, they fail. And with that failure, many of us are not strong enough to try again. Our discouragement is so great that we cannot recapture the incentive that caused us to begin to sculpture the thing at which we failed. Thus, it is one of the "marred vessels" in our lives.

The purpose of this lesson is to show you the importance of reshaping that vessel, of taking the clay that you have misshaped and working it into a thing of beauty while the clay is still pliable. In so doing, it is very possible and quite probable that you may make of it something very much more beautiful than that which you set out to do for, as you know, we so often learn by our mistakes.

Men like Edison, Lincoln and others became great mainly because of their mistakes. We would not have the wonderful inventions of today had it not been for the errors of great men in shaping the clay of their dreams. Those ideas were given them by God. It was their duty to make of this talent something worthwhile. And after many failures, through perseverance they were able to carry on until they attained the perfection that we enjoy today as the result of reshaping their "marred vessels".

It may be that you are one of those who have had so many disappointments in life. You feel like there is no use to try again, a feeling of defeat and probably a feeling that life has cheated you. As a Mayan in the higher degrees, most of the members in this class know that character is the real foundation of all worthwhile success, and you have learned not to give up. But, for the benefit of those whose efforts need strengthening, this lesson was prepared.

I have always liked the homely words of the well-known poet, Edgar A. Guest, when somebody said it couldn't be done, and he replied that maybe it couldn't but he would be one who wouldn't say so 'til he tried. With this outlook on life, one can never fail for long. There may be times of discouragement when our hopes and dreams seem to fail, and the purpose of this lesson is to strengthen the assurance within you that you can rise again and go on to success in the attainment of those things you desire.

The greatest results in life are usually attained by very simple means and using ordinary qualities, and I think we may say that two of the most important ingredients for attaining our success are Common Sense and Perseverance. In order to become successful in anything we set out to do, three more that are absolutely necessary are Nature, Study and Practice. A little later you will receive a lesson on Nature, which I feel is very important and could change your life completely.

When you become discouraged, always remember the wonderful words of Helen Keller who, as you know, was deaf, dumb and blind. She said, "We can do anything

we want to do if we stick to it long enough", and she proved this by her own accomplishments under the most severe handicaps possible to a man or woman - deaf, dumb and blind. Think on this as we repeat the following prayer, and never permit "marred vessels" to cause you to give up. Rather, let each mistake make you more determined to reshape your vessel. And now, our prayer:

PRAYER

I am clay in Thy hands, O Infinite Potter, and the tasks of life are clay in my hands. Help me to shape, and if necessary, to reshape them, into the pattern of Thy perfect will. Amen.

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THE MARRED VESSEL Jeremiah in the Eighteenth Chapter of his prophecy illustrates a point by referring to the way in which a vessel on the potter's wheel may be marred, and the prophet, refusing to waste it by throwing it away, reworks it on the wheel into another vessel as it seems good to him to do. The genius and skill that has shaped the failure is reapplied to the process of saving it and making it into a success.

No one knows what the pattern of this dream work of the potter's art was intended to be, for Jeremiah saw this happen with his own eyes and the occurrence was real. Like so many dream patterns in this life it was never realized. Something happened. We do not know exactly what, for the prophet goes into no details. He merely makes the terse statement that the vessel was marred, and then redeemed.

That particular pattern was lost, but not the material and its possibilities. The potter was not in despair, for he knew that while he could not make exactly what he had first intended, there were countless other forms any one of which he could.

The misshapen clay was still on the wheel. It was still moist and pliable. He would be all the more careful now because of the mishap that had occurred. He could still produce something just as good, perhaps better. He might make that beautiful urn he had imagined the other day. There was just about enough material, and what he had on the wheel could even be used as the basis for it. The world would still have new loveliness and utility from his labor.

Herein lies one of life's great laws of compensation. The beautiful and the useful come because someone is willing to invest the love and skill to bring it into being and give it to the race. Things happen to our labors and ourselves in the process of their coming into being. It is inevitable that an occasional effort be broken, but it need never be lost. The potter must never give up in despair and cast it aside. If he is a man of courage and vision he can change the pattern and create a new product, perhaps even a better one.

This vision symbolizes wreckage and its redemption in many fields. It applies in the lives of nations. In fact, that was what the discussion was all

about. A people had not lived up to the honor and distinction that had been bestowed upon it and had fallen victim to aggressors in search of power and territory. It had been broken on the wheel but one of its prophets was telling it that it need not be lost, that the God of nations could still rework it into something worthwhile. A nation or an individual should not give up in despair, or rebel in bitterness, or surrender in weakness, or forget the dreams that have been so lovely; but this need not happen. The vessel can be saved.

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WE ARE ALL POTTERS We are all potters working at our private, personal wheels. We have our dreams of the beautiful, the useful, the happy and the good. We are fashioning ideals, friendships, professions, ambitions, home lives, afflictions, thought and emotional lives, citizenships, community and public services, and all the creative wonders possible to people with hands and imaginations.

Among the many who will read and ponder this lesson there is not one person who does not have one or more creative plans on the turning wheel, shaping them as it moves into the results of his having lived in the world. You have had these efforts break into pieces in the process of their making. Perhaps you have let some of them fall at your feet in ruins to be remembered in after years as hopes that failed and plans that went astray. Or perhaps you have been courageous enough to refuse to accept these needless losses, and to retrieve them by changing the pattern and realizing something from it anyway.

To do this you will need to be cheerful, constructive, optimistic, brave, and resourceful. Do not think this is for others, but not for you. You can do it, realize its possibilities, and be the better and the happier for it.

If this is not the case, then you are not living a purposeful life, and not to live life purposefully is to waste it. In that case one's ability to make his life and work count in the world has been marred on the wheel and thrown away. The cure for this is simply to start doing it the better way. If you are living a purposeful life you are certainly making even the vessels marred on the wheel possibilities for value in the world.

Do not stand among the ruins of the past bemoaning your failures or complaining that Life has not treated you fairly. You have failed, and needlessly; but there is the rest of a lifetime of possible conservation of life's sweetness and worth before you. Always remember that Life has not failed you. It is you that have failed life. It is never necessary to continue doing so. You can begin where you are and where you will to turn even your failures into successes.

This is one way we find out what we are good for and turn from what we cannot do to what we can do. Possibly that last vessel was marred in your hands because you were trying to shape a pattern that is not needed, of one that has already been done often enough, or one that is outmoded, or one that is not good, when you have the ability to shape the clay Life has given you into something inevitable, indispensable, and inspired, perhaps something that is an improvement over anything yet produced. Take advantage of that possibility. Think of the

marred vessel on your wheel not as a defeat, but as an opportunity.

What a race of potters we are, each owing the world and ourselves something of our art and skill! Some are learning, and some are masters. Some are failing, and some succeeding. But saddest of them all are the ones who sit before their wheels making no effort to use them and to retrieve what does not turn out well. All this is not the burden of life, but its joy.

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OTHER Let us think a little while about some of the ways in which we potters
MARRED VESSELS of life mar the vessels we are shaping on our wheels, spoil the beauty we have planned for them, and create situations in which we should change the patterns and by creating something different, avoid failure, loss, and misuse of the time, ability, and material.

We do it by awkward handling of the affairs of life. We break or damage lovely plans by not being careful of our handling of our opportunities. We say too much, or too little, or the wrong thing. We set up situations in the wrong way, so parts of the plan do not fall into place properly. The more important a matter is, the more necessary it is to deal wisely with it.

We do it by applying too little force to push the matter to completion, or so much force that it is spoiled in the process. Notice a really skilled workman of any kind, and observe how exactly he measures the strength he applies, just enough to do the thing, whether it is heavy or light, rough or delicate. A great deal of success depends on this one thing. It may apply to touch, speech, human contact, or exertion. Measure the touch by the need, and learn to do it exactly.

We do it by not approaching matters in the right spirit. This is especially true if they have to do with human relations in any way. You cannot deal with such things roughly or arbitrarily. They are like locked doors. They should be opened not with battering rams, but with keys. You can do almost anything with people if you work as one in spirit with them. Otherwise you are most likely to spoil whatever it is you are trying to accomplish. Learn what rapport is, and seek to establish it wherever you are trying to accomplish anything that involves cooperation. This could be one of the most valuable things you ever learned.

We do it by not being clear and definite enough in knowing what we want to do. The potter must know very exactly what he is trying to produce. He must see it very definitely in his mind's eye. If he does not, there will be a moment of doubt, a slip of the hand, and a marred effort. An old saying runs, "Plan your work and work your plan". To do so will save you many a marred vessel on your wheel of labor and service, with its consequent loss of time and success.

We do it by not taking seriously enough what we attempt to do. The vessel on your potter's wheel, whatever its nature or form, is no trivial matter. It is a part of your one earthly life, and perhaps a key part that will strengthen or weaken the entire structure. Nothing is so small in either reality or appearance that we can afford to take it lightly and let its quality go by default. Whatever

you do, do it rightly. It will pay.

We do it in many other ways too, You can detect them as you become familiar with the operation of this law. Of course, along with the vessels we mar, there are many others that turn out well, some even outstanding examples of ability and power. Strive for this standard, but never think when you miss it that your work is lost.

THROUGHOUT LIFE RUNS THE POSSIBILITY OF REDEMPTION, THE ABILITY TO SAVE THAT WHICH IS OR MIGHT BE LOST. MAKE USE OF IT AS YOU PROCEED WITH LIVING.

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IT IS NEVER TOO LATE It is never too late to begin shaping something beautiful or worthwhile on the wheel of life, or to reshape it if all has not gone well with it. We owe the world a contribution of beauty, usefulness, and good. It must have them, and it has no other way to get them except through us. Often we complain of the world's lack of the very things we ourselves could and should provide. There is only one ideal time to begin meeting that obligation, and that time is now. You cannot begin yesterday now, and the fact that you did not begin yesterday is no reason for not beginning today. You can perhaps begin tomorrow if you must, but today would be more certain.

Many people of middle age and beyond very commonly make this mistake. The time they have lost by not beginning or by marring too much of their work looms large to them, and properly so. They make their mistake in not realizing that lost time is itself the greatest reason for not losing any more. Not only can we accomplish wonders at older ages, but the process carries yet more values for them. They need it not only for the sake of achievement, but also for that of its tonic effects. Busy people are happy people, and this is one sure happiness older people can have, to see creative efforts grow to value under their hands.

Young people need this suggestion too, and for the special reason that they have not yet lost much if any time and opportunity. Some are lackadaisical because they have not yet found themselves, and do not realize the importance of all this.

There is another reason that, though it seems strange, is real. Have you not noticed the surprising fact that while a few older people still consider themselves young, many young people consider themselves mature and even old? You will actually find many of them failing to take right directions, begin important things, and even to make important changes in their programs of life because they have the strange idea that it is already too late.

We here and now make the bold blanket assertion, allowing for no exceptions, that it is never too late for anyone at any age to attempt building life values or to retrieve those that get broken in the process of their making. Whatever of value one creates counts for that much. Whatever ones he saves count for

that much more. Whatever ones he rescues, salvages, and redeems, count for that much more yet.

Whoever you are, and whatever your age or condition may be, this is a day of opportunity for you. You have probably dreamed out special purposes, and you always have at least life's common responsibilities. They are projects whirling on your wheel of life, whether you realize it or not. You can shape all of them, and some of them you can shape with expert hands. Why not study to make them beautiful and worthwhile? If now and then one is damaged, do not discard it. Rescue it by shaping it into another pattern as good or better. So do we build up the assets of our lives to bear testimony that we have tried.

This is a good day and hour, not only for what we have done, but also for what we yet can do. Capitalize upon it.

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APPRAISE YOUR EFFORTS A potter constantly appraises and evaluates his work, watching it with a careful eye, so he soon knows if anything is going wrong. If he discovers a threat of failure early enough, he may be able to correct it in time to keep it from really going wrong. If not, he at least discovers the trouble in time to change the plan and thus save time, effort, and greater loss.

It will pay you to do the same with every plan you are or will be working out, whether it is the building of a career, improving a professional program, making a room in the house more attractive, or building a friendship. Everyone from the head of the Government to the operator of a street corner peanut stand has the idea for some improvement in mind. He can tell, if he tries, when and if anything is going wrong with those plans.

You come somewhere in the long list, so watch your work. If it is going right, keep it so, or improve it if you can. If it is beginning to slip, catch it and straighten out the difficulty before it worsens. If it is too late for that, revise your plan for this particular effort and produce something different but as good or better. There are many roads to success, and by whatever road you reach it, it is still success.

Make this check on your progress not only once but frequently and to the completion of the enterprise, whether it is the work of five minutes or a lifetime. You can spoil any piece of work five minutes after you have made a check and found everything in good order, as well as earlier or later. You can spoil it when you are beginning to add the finishing touches as well as in the earliest stage of the endeavor. The point is to note it and correct it before it is spoiled or lost.

Stop often and ask yourself these questions. What are you trying to do? Into what separate parts does the total fall? What should you undertake that you are not now doing? Are you prepared to carry these efforts through? If not, can you, and are you willing, to become so?

This should lay your program and its particulars before you, so you can

take them up one by one and determine what you can do with them. This is the time to begin watching for mistakes, correcting them or changing the plan as seems possible and wise.

There is a difference between salvaging anything and saving it. If you discover the trouble soon enough you may be able to solve it and make the result all it was intended to be, that is, you can save it. If it is too serious or too long delayed, you can take the wreckage and turn it into something else of value, that is, you can salvage it.

To do this one needs to have and cultivate the saving grace of self-criticism. Few people enjoy being criticised by others. The best way to avoid it is to beat them to it and criticise ourselves. We can do so more vigorously because we do it secretly. We can drive ourselves to see and correct our own mistakes, where others could not go. Moreover, we thus strengthen our characters and improve all our working methods. These are all things no one can do for us, but that we must do for ourselves.

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**NEVER
LOSE HEART** Half the mistakes and failures in the world could be avoided if we would all set a great motto before our minds, turn our inner eyes often upon it, carry it much in our thoughts, and strive constantly to obey it. It would consist of only three words, but they would be written in large letters. Its simple message would be: "Never Lose Heart".

Most of the good work of all kinds done in the world by people of all kinds is good because it was done by someone who put his heart into it. Most of the slipshod, uncompleted, and unsuccessful work is done by people who do not do so. To put one's heart into his efforts, including his everyday living, is like releasing oxygen into a roomful of vitiated air, or sunshine into a curtained room from which it has long been absent, or taking nourishing food after long hunger. It means putting life into an action and its result. It is the soul's natural tonic.

Putting one's heart into his living and his work enlivens his power, sharpens his wits, and helps him find pleasure in his work. It also does another thing that smacks of the miraculous. It actually puts accuracy, power, and excellence of quality into his skill and workmanship. It can change one almost instantly from a drone to a worker on the way to mastery. Most of us have seen this happen, and many of us have had it happen to ourselves. To lose heart, or to gain it, or to regain it after having lost it, makes a different person of anyone, and the latter process makes a more effective one.

One sure way to lose heart in one's work is to think of it as drudgery. Another is to think only of the material reward and not see also that good work carries a value and compensation of its own. To anyone whose opinion of work is that it is a hardship it will be just that. One's work is not only his means of livelihood or a round of duties that come with his situation. It is also his bosom friend. All the big or little things we do are glowing with a meaning which,

if we see it, makes them privileges that yield us peace and satisfaction. It is putting our hearts into them that brings all this out.

What is the relevancy of all this to our general theme? Just this, that the potter who puts his heart into the shaping of the clay on the wheel of his purpose will not have many marred vessels to reshape. The person who does so with the living of his life, or the performance of any routine duty, will find that it is a wonderful form of success insurance.

A critic judging between renditions of the same piece of music by two different people said, "They both sing well, and their voices sound much the same; but this one puts more love into it, and that makes art." In the whole reach of life it is true that while the one who merely puts his abilities into anything may be a good workman, the one who puts his heart into his work is an artist. Those who do so will not have much reclaiming of their work to do, for they will be likely to do it right the first time.

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THE LARGER VIEW This is not just a haphazard list of isolated problems and fragmentary solutions. It is a unit, and a very large and challenging one. It builds up into a life policy and program. It is this we have been discussing, and nothing less.

The products of the potter's wheel are designed not for beauty or utility, but for beauty and utility. At their best the beautiful should be useful, and the useful should be beautiful. Each should be more so because of the other.

Here lies a great trouble with many of our human endeavors. We create things to be either beautiful or useful, and no more. We do it without realizing that usefulness makes beauty more lovely, and beauty makes usefulness more helpful. The consequence is that much of our beauty is useless, and much of our utility is unattractive. The potter who is a true artist strives for a combination of both effects, and attains it.

We need a more beautiful world. God has made the earth a lovely garden spot, but it is for us to lay out the walks, plant the flowers, and landscape the spaces. He has made it a wonderful homesite, but He has left us to replenish and subdue it, to develop it and put it in order. He has made it a wonderful home, but He depends on us to have the taste to arrange it with beauty that serves and comfort that adds to its beauty. He has given us miraculous lives, not to be filled with disorder and grow up in weeds, but to be made rich, and fine, and noble.

Everything we do is a part of the lives we live, and the lives we live are parts of the community, the world, and the ages. When we put the clay of possibility on the wheel of life and produce a value, no matter how small or obscure, we are making history. If we begin some endeavor, and it breaks down, and we change to some other possibility for the material in work, we are saving a value from destruction and preserving a quality not only for our use but also for

the use of countless others. Everything we do or fail to do changes the world by just that much, and for better or worse.

Some parts of the world the human race has made very beautiful and good to live in. Some it has not improved at all. Some it has so devastated as to make them positively ugly. The ultimate goal of history is a lovely world and a perfected world life. So far our efforts to achieve this have been too slow and spotty. Every human being can do something about that. How? By contributing to the ages one truly first-rate life, and the service it can render.

This brings the entire matter right down to each of us personally. Wherever we are and whatever our situations may be, our responsibility begins at this point. We are potters and the world asks us for beautiful and helpful thoughts, words, and acts. When we give them we not only improve the world but we also grant ourselves the favor of happiness and satisfaction.

Take pleasure in the good conditions and values you can create. Do your best with them, but if something goes wrong with any of them, do not lose heart. Change the pattern and make it into something else. If that something else is better, it will mean that you yourself have been improved in the process.

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As we close this lesson, make the following Affirmation a daily habit:

AFFIRMATION

I accept my obligation as a creator of beautiful and useful living. Every marred purpose and endeavor I rework into something else that will fill a place and meet a need.

Blessings!

YOUR INSTRUCTOR

