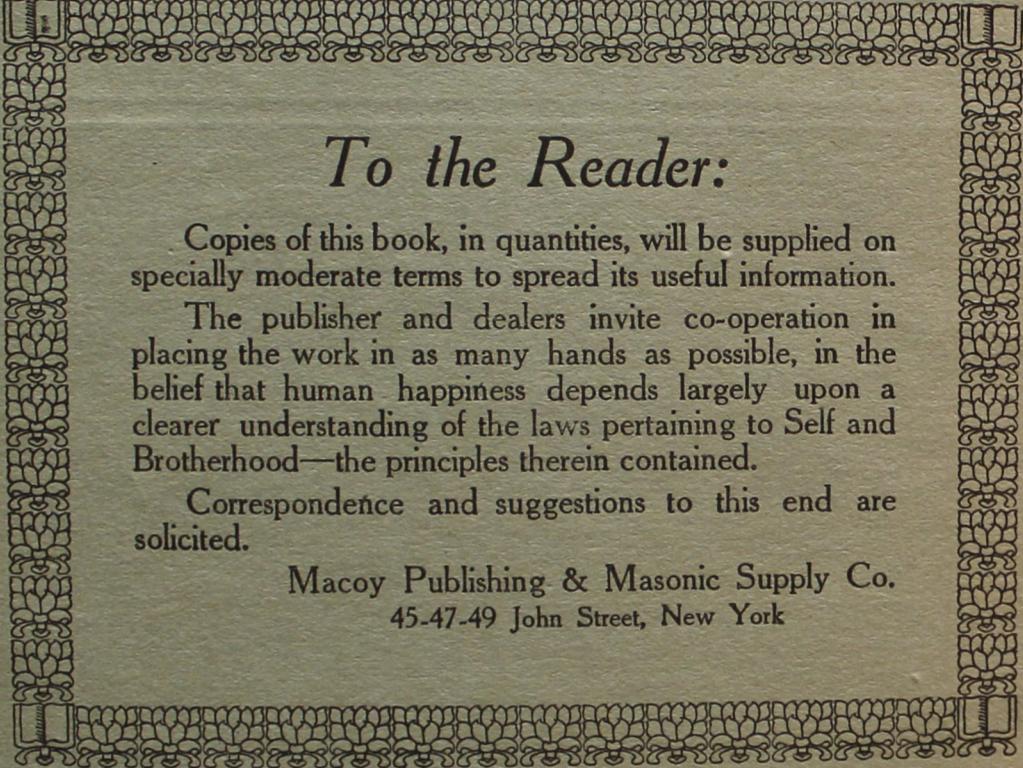


THE
Law of Suggestion
ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION

By W. J. COLVILLE





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So very much is now constantly being spoken and written concerning the power of Suggestion, that public curiosity is naturally greatly aroused over the whole subject, and most of all concerning its applicability to Health, Happiness and Prosperity, three mighty words we often see grouped in close relationship. What is Suggestion, and wherein does it differ from compulsion, or coercion? This is a pertinent inquiry, particularly when we encounter, as we often do, many people who are very much afraid of being mysteriously robbed of some imaginary individuality, or mental freedom they have never yet attained. Hypnotic suggestion is a phrase we frequently encounter, and it is surely the adjective *hypnotic*, not the noun *suggestion*, which strikes terror in the breasts of timid weaklings, who are always trembling in fear lest some one, or some mysterious, uncanny influence should possess them and compel them to do something against their inclination.

It is pitiful to hear the fears expressed by the weak-willed and weak-minded, whenever this topic is broached, and it requires but very little knowledge of the mental condition of the tremblers to discover

that they are lamentably deficient in that sacred individuality of which they incessantly chant the praises.

Individuality, once attained, is never forfeited. No one can rob us of what we have actually earned. The practice of Suggestion with healing motive is generally used in cases where the state of the sufferer gives evidence of lack of self-assertion; and the real object of the treatment (even though in some cases nominally hypnotic), is to release a victim from some condition of slavery to disease or to a pernicious habit, but never to enslave him either mentally or physically.

The Medical Profession resorts to many injurious and obnoxious practices where medication and operations are concerned, but in the field of Suggestive Therapeutics it is highly gratifying to note that the usages now rapidly coming into vogue are calculated to work a much-needed reform in the medical field, and at the same time confer immense benefit on many otherwise incurable sufferers.

We cannot circumscribe the power of Suggestion, for none of us can discern any limitation to its possibilities. Although it has always been a large and important factor in healing, it is only quite recently that many members of the Medical Profession have commended it, and their attention has been called to it very largely by the mighty work accomplished through its agency in "irregular" directions.

Suggestion, as a factor in business success, is quite as pronounced as in the field of *T h e r a p e u t i c s*. Should any one take a course of training in a thoroughly modern business college, or peruse *Corre-*

spondence Lessons furnished by enterprising advertisers, it would not be long before the discovery would be made that by far the major part of the method employed to win confidence, to hold attention, and to promote and increase business generally, is *suggestion*, ranging all the way from the obviously external value of an attractive appearance and good address, to the far subtler and immeasurably more important phases of the question, which pertain to the distinctly mental or psychic aspects of the matter. Suggestions made only by outward appearances produce shallow and therefore transitory results, but suggestions due to interior force and strength of character, coupled with firm conviction and entire conscientiousness on the part of the suggester, lead to permanent results. A decidedly high moral standard from the point of view of a keen sense of honor must be lived up to by all who would make their practice of suggestion a pronounced success, for nothing exerts so deterrent an influence as sinister motives. Not only invalids (nervous cases in particular, on whose behalf suggestive measures are most frequently employed), but ordinary people we meet in the business world and in social life are becoming quite sensitive enough to feel sincerity or insincerity in the mental attitude of one who approaches them. We have no idea how often people are put upon their guard by the very effort to deceive them; this is the case with children and unsophisticated adults far more than with persons who, having lent themselves more or less to the practice of deception, have lost the keen edge of their original sensitiveness.

“The deceitful man will himself be deceived,” is a

very true statement. In like manner we can declare that the thoroughly sincere man will not be entrapped by adverse suggestions unless he stifles his intuitions, in which case he has extinguished a lamp supplied him for his guidance. Our sub-consciousness is a very fruitful field for speculative philosophers, and we are beginning to discover that there is far more to be said in favor of its wisdom than in criticism of its folly. Thomson Jay Hudson deserves enduring gratitude for having set people to thinking about that plane of consciousness he called the "subjective mind." This plane is amenable to suggestion from all quarters, although we do not think that he ever clearly discriminated between *sub* and *super* consciousness, therefore he left a good deal of his philosophy in need of some straightening out by his successors. In the first of his five well-known books, "The Law of Psychic Phenomena," he treated the subject of hypnotism with unusual lucidity and fairness. A glowing tribute was paid to the responsiveness of the average man or woman to health-inducing suggestions *vs.* those of an injurious nature. Persons ignorant of psychology generally assume that it is quite easy to hypnotize people and then compel them to act upon any suggestions given them. This is very far from true, for not only is it usually difficult to induce hypnosis, but after it is induced we still have to deal with a vigilant sub-consciousness which never really slumbers, and which is a far more wide-awake sentinel than the objective reasoning faculty. In treating suggestively for health, happiness and prosperity, we have the co-operation of this sub-conscious warden, because deeply implanted in the

sub-consciousness of every one of us is love of life, desire for health and happiness, and general intention to promote our welfare.

It would be contrary to all reason and experience to say that people wish to remain ill when they are constantly spending money and undergoing all sorts of painful or disagreeable operations in the hope of regaining health. We are often silly and stubborn enough to cling to stupid beliefs and injurious practices, which keep us ill, unhappy and unsuccessful, but we never entirely surrender our desire for the ordinary good things of existence, nor is it ever false to affirm that hope remains as long as life continues.

Now it is not *from* but *to* our primal and universal instincts that suggestions for well-being are invariably made, consequently the task before the mental therapist is by no means a hopeless one. The chief obstacle encountered by beginners in the practice of Suggestion is either lack of confidence or of concentration. Until we have developed a fair amount of confidence, and accustomed ourselves to the practice of concentration, our success will probably be only slight, but as our powers and confidence unfold through exercise, it is by going steadily forward with our mental work that we can reasonably hope to attain any high measure of proficiency. The most external methods may be resorted to at first, unless we are among those who intuitively feel that silent methods are often more potently effective, in which case we need have no recourse to either the oral or visual varieties. No matter on what plane we may practice the work of suggesting, it is essential that we are clear in our thought as to what we intend to suggest. It is

particularly easy in most instances to provide exactly the right sort of material objects for preliminary suggestive uses. The method called by Henry Wood "Ideal Suggestion through Mental Photography," has proved useful, as well as popular. This method can be employed anywhere by any one who secures a good motto and places it so that he may study it from a comfortable position. Quiet and restful attitudes of mind and body are alike desirable, and if while gazing upon an object which is making a good suggestion you should feel sleepy or drowsy, allow yourself to doze off and go to sleep with that excellent suggestion entering into your mind and about to take up residence in your sub-consciousness.

When selecting single words or mottos for suggestive use, it is necessary to procure letters (painted or printed) which stand out in bold relief, so that they are unmistakably distinct in appearance and leave no room for doubt as to their meaning. Usually, large, white cards are preferable, on which should be traced in vivid color the word to be visualized by the gazer. Strength, Power, Courage, Vigor, and all words of kindred import, should be traced in scarlet or vermillion. Such words as Rest, Peace, Repose, and all of that family, should be exhibited in some cheerful but quiet hue of blue or violet. The word Harmony can be beautifully traced in the seven prismatic—either a hue to a letter, or the seven hues introduced in each letter as they appear in the rainbow spectrum; the latter arrangement is preferable to the former, but it requires a more experienced artist to successfully accomplish it. When sentences are employed, the same color schemes may be adopted,

the dominant word in the sentence giving its appropriate color to all its associates. For example, such a text as "GOD IS LOVE" may be traced in brilliant red with a golden border to each letter, but in that case you also suggest the unexpressed thought of WISDOM, which is the complement or counterpart of LOVE. Green can always be introduced to quell home-sickness, as it is the home-color of our planet. I AM HAPPY IN MY HOME, is a very good phrase to trace in green, or I AM CONTENT WITH MY POSITION. Every practitioner must use discretion in the selection of words and mottos to suit individual needs, but there are always a number of good universals with which we shall never dispense. Many people who have studied pathology find it a drawback when they undertake to give mental treatment, on account of their tendency to visualize the appearance of some disorder exhibited by the patient, but no such unpleasant liability is traceable to acquaintance with anatomy and physiology, although no scientific knowledge is positively necessary for the practice of suggestion. We often find that illiterate persons do more good by their spiritual methods than is usually accomplished by the most highly finished university graduate. The reason for this is that a certain kind of ignorance is helpful, ignorance of the ailment we need to vanquish or the vice we need to exterminate.

Pure air entering an apartment renders the continuance of foul air therein impossible; so, in like manner, will the entrance of new thoughts into the mind drive out the old. It is to introduce new

thought that the Suggestionist is working, just as some one may kindle a fire in a damp room and leave the fire to drive out the dampness. "I have been treating myself for that headache, but I'm actually feeling worse," is a common expression, and one which throws great light on the reverse side of the practice of suggestion. You have contemplated an affliction and thereby increased it. No intelligent person who knows the barest rudiments of useful suggestive practice could fall into such an error, or believe that so insane a mental act could possibly prove beneficial. Nothing can be more ludicrous than the queer nonsense that is mistaken by unreasoning people for suggestive practice! "I suppose I ought to say I haven't it," is a sample of the nonsense one often hears when suggestion is mentioned among those who know nothing of its actual workings, but have heard some garbled version of it. Let it be understood, once for all, that we are to suggest to ourselves and others, only something we desire to see manifested and all that verbal rubbish will immediately disappear. Contemplate any "it" which you deem desirable to call into further expression, such as added strength, peace, joy, amiability, tranquility, and a host of other excellencies, but never permit your thoughts to dwell upon the ills you seek to conquer, for they must be routed by the incoming of their inevitable adversaries or starved out through lack of sustenance.

We all know that no condition can long endure without support; the germ theory now so widely debated lends itself instantly to our purpose in this discussion. There are many acknowledged varieties

of microbes, some benign and some malign. If we give continually more and more encouragement to the former, they will overcome the latter, and even if we contemplated the matter only negatively, we could readily see how the pathogenic germs we wish to extirpate would of necessity perish were they provided with no nutrition. Every kind of thought is in correspondence with some physical condition, and we certainly need not go into any profound metaphysical speculation to demonstrate the obvious. Were it not for the value of suggestion, the doctor himself would be a negligible quantity and the medicines administered would alone be of considerable value. No school of practice to-day ever attempts to undervalue the importance of the personal factor, indeed medical treatises often lay immense stress upon the confidence-inspiring presence of the qualified physician, who frequently administers only a *placebo*, in which no one, least of all a medical doctor, believes to have any other than a suggestive value.

Were it not for the power of suggestion, such practice would amount to arrant humbug, as it would be deceiving a patient through making him believe he was taking a powerful medicine, when he was really only taking a little bread, sugar, or water. But because suggestion is a mighty power, and no one knows this better than experienced physicians, that seemingly deceptive mode of treatment is strictly scientific and entirely laudable, provided the one who practices it realizes the force of suggestion and is actually giving mental treatment understandingly. We often have to begin very low down in the scale, so far as methods are concerned, as we must begin

with all people exactly where we find them; but we are no educators or benefactors if we leave people exactly as we found them.

At this point we may proceed to auto-suggestion. You have already been treated by another and received benefit or you have treated another and conferred benefit; in both cases unmistakably and (from the standpoint of the beneficiary) mysteriously. Now the time is ripe for a study of the means whereby one benefited the other, so that the second party may become enlightened equally with the first. Study and practice on one's own account is indispensable to the attainment of a condition in which one is able to steer clear of a return of the ailments and weaknesses to which he was formerly liable. Environment is an important factor at all times until we have learned to master it, and as high degrees of mental conquest are yet but rare, we cannot afford to dispense with outward helps. What can be the value of any Ecclesiastical or Masonic ceremonial and imagery apart from its suggestive uses? Surely ritual can never be an end in itself, although it may be made a beautiful and useful means toward many a noble end. The very slightest reflection, coupled with a little experience, elucidates this matter perfectly. Socialists are continually telling us that before the intelligence and morals of a community can be improved, environment must be altered greatly for the better. This is one side of the case, but only one. The other side is vigorously emphasized by those New Thought teachers whose special mission it is to assure their hearers that the power to change conditions for the better is within themselves. A well-balanced philosophy and

practice takes cognizance of both sides of this enormous subject, and undertakes to give graded lessons to pupils. First aid to the injured, is a phrase which has much meaning for the Suggestionist, as well as those who rely upon medicine and surgery, for we have to heal mental wounds and minister oftentimes to those whose malady springs from wounded feelings. At first we may offer consolation and deeply sympathize in the right way with one who is extremely sensitive and almost crushed beneath a blow to tender susceptibilities, but before any permanent benefit can accrue, such hyper-sensitiveness must be mastered or one will remain a prostrate victim of surroundings. There is not a disease or crime known to humanity which cannot be obliterated by persistent suggestion of the right kind; and, although we cannot reasonably expect that the whole gigantic work of social reconstruction can be instantly accomplished, we need not wait an instant before doing something in the direction of improvement. Blind belief in the power of outward conditions over us, in place of acknowledging our ability to change conditions, is the root-cause of all continuing misery and desperation. As soon as we give up prating of being the victims of circumstances we shall set to work to master them, but master and servant to the same thing, at the same time, we cannot conceive ourselves to be, by any stretch of fancy. Where we were formerly slaves we can appear as freemen, but we must play a large part in our own emancipation or we shall never be free more than nominally.

It is quite as often with regard to finance that we need the help of the right sort of suggestion as with

reference to bodily vigor, for we meet many people in the enjoyment of robust health physically, who are constantly complaining of financial poverty. It is the chronic suggestions we make to ourselves that actually materialize, but that is something most of us are extremely unwilling to admit unless things are going very well with us, and then it is never disagreeable to believe that our own mental states are so good that they attract and maintain prosperity. Every thought is indeed a suggestion and a magnet, but all outward words and deeds are also suggestions, and they react upon ourselves and others to a far greater extent than we usually realize. When people allow themselves to believe they are growing old and losing much of their youthful efficiency, they are very prone to dress in black and take on a general appearance of aging rapidly, or of having aged already; the result is that they both suggest to themselves and attract the thought from others that they are wearing out and will soon have to retire from active service because their strength and faculties are failing. If such people want employment they find it very difficult to obtain it, because they hold the thought, and unconsciously convey it to others, that they have not the power to do what they might wish to undertake, and no employer—if he can get any help in the efficiency of which he feels confidence—deliberately hires what he believes to be incompetent assistance. It seems hard and cruel that people should be brushed aside or shelved because they are no longer youthful, but it is largely their own fault that they are thus unkindly treated. People talk much about having to save their energies which are rapidly declining, and

declare that, in order to do so, they must cut themselves off from all recreation, on the plea that they must save all their waning vitality for necessary exertions. Such a policy is little less than suicidal, as it consumes far more energy in adverse suggestion than could well be expended in any moderate amount of ordinary dissipation, and the results flowing from this benighted course of action are extremely weakening, because of the continual fastening upon the subconsciousness of a growing sense of inability to engage in active exercises. Once in a while we read of a man chopping wood on his hundredth birth anniversary, and we often hear of well-known people who have led strenuous and prominent lives celebrating a ninetieth birthday and taking active and intelligent part in some rational amusements, but such persons have never grown morbid, they have never laid aside the harness, and they have never regarded their employment as something irksome or fatiguing. It is a very noteworthy and an intensely helpful fact that distinguished men and women who have lived lives of almost phenomenal activity have preserved their faculties to an unusually ripe age, and it will invariably be found that they took a great deal of pleasure in their life-work and believed in their ability to indefinitely continue it. Nothing is more advantageous, if one is getting to any extent tired and rusty, than to go as often as possible into an atmosphere where bright ideas are being promulgated, and where the general sentiment expressed is intensely optimistic, for genuine optimism is the only sane and healthy philosophy of life.

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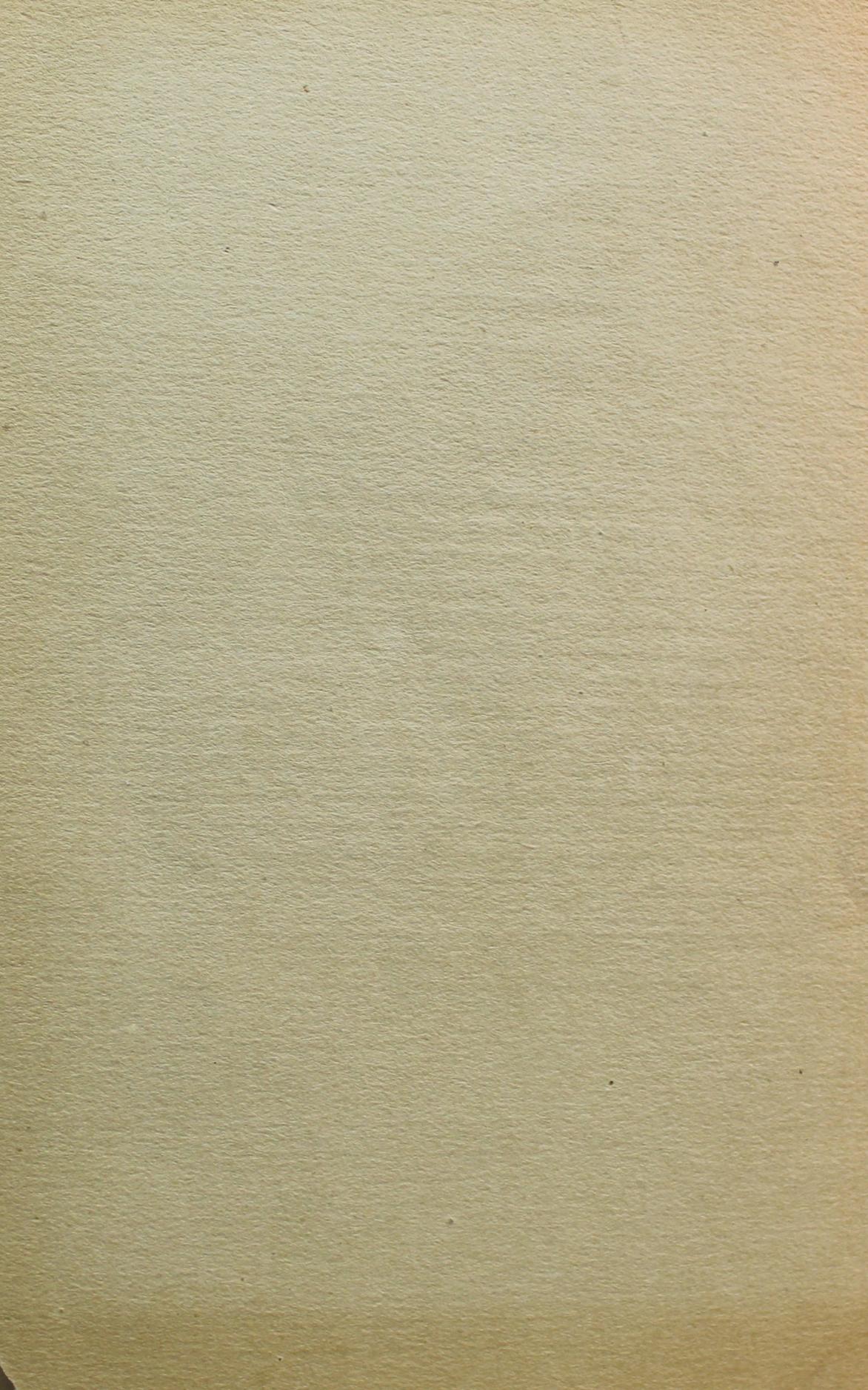
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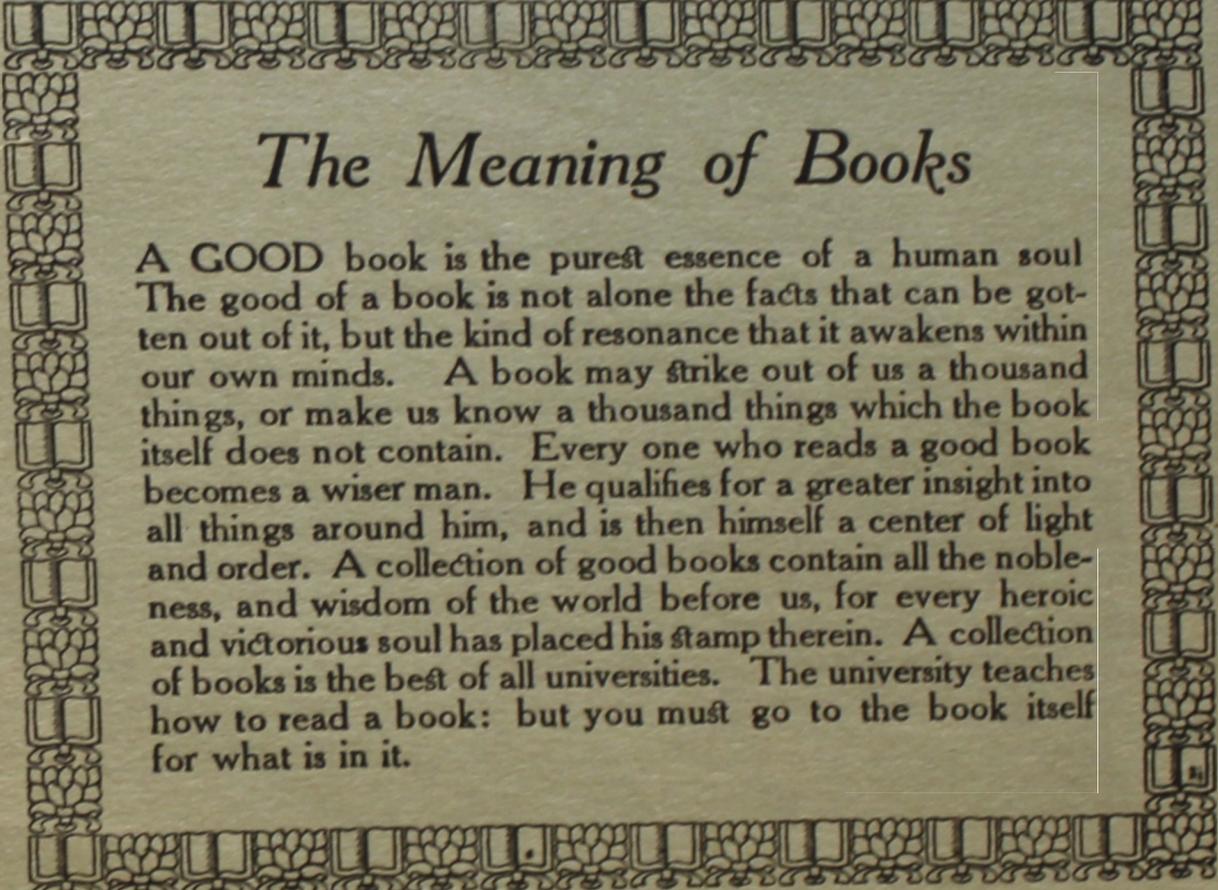
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