

The Making of a Man

A Lecture Delivered by Mr. Bryan on Various Occasions

We spend relatively too much time in the perfecting of the things which man uses and too little time in the perfecting of man himself. In this age of cooperation we find an increasing multitude of organizations, each one dedicated to a special purpose—that purpose being the improvement of something that will serve man. To illustrate what I mean, let us consider agriculture for a moment; it is the largest single department of industrial activity among our people. Who will enumerate the farmers' organizations? Some make a specialty of cattle raising, and these are sub-divided into groups that direct their attention, some to milk breeds, some to beef breeds; and each of these sub-divisions is still further sub-divided into groups that give preference to some particular strain. In like manner we have numerous organizations whose members devote attention to swine breeding, each group perfecting a type. Next come the horse breeders, and these are sub-divided into fanciers of the draft horse (still further sub-divided into several smaller groups), the coach horse, the trotting horse, the riding horse, and the racing horse—not to speak of the different kinds of ponies for children. All of these are trying to produce the best animal of their kind but they are producing and perfecting for man. Then they have the poultry group, with the rivalries between many varieties; and so, also, with the organizations that have for their object the production of grains, vegetables, fruits, berries, etc.

If we leave the farm and come into the city, we find the work of specialization as fully developed among the manufacturers, each one endeavoring to produce the best article in his line at the lowest cost. The commercial life of our municipalities, the social life of our communities, the political life of state and nation, our schools, our hospitals, our churches,—all afford illustration of the ceaseless effort to develop, to improve, to perfect everything that man can employ to please the body, to minister to the mind or to satisfy the soul.

If man is worthy to have so much thought and labor devoted to his comfort and advancement, surely there is no theme more deserving of our consideration than *The Making of a Man*.

Only when we come to man do we find an immeasurable gulf between extremes. We can describe the difference between the largest potato and the smallest one in ounces, the difference between the best steer and the poorest one in pounds, and the difference between the most valuable horse and the least valuable one in dollars; but who will suggest a ratio between man as he may be and man as he sometimes is? Man at his best is but little lower than the angels, while man at his worst may in some respects be worse than the brutes about him. And each one of us is moving each day, each hour, in one direction or the other,—we are either ascending toward the highest point that man can reach or descending toward the lowest depths to which man can fall!

If I am to present plans and specifications I owe it to you in return for your attendance and attention to present those suitable for the building of a life upon the highest possible plane, a life capable of realizing the best that is attainable by man.

We recognize at once that in dealing with man we are dealing with a three-fold being. It is not difficult for me to believe in the Trinity, for I see a sort of trinity in every human being. There is in each one of us a physical man, a mental man, and a moral man—so inseparable that one cannot exist upon this earth without the other, and yet so distinct that one may be developed and the others left undeveloped. The body may be lifted to a high state of physical perfection, while the mind and the heart are uncultured; the mind, too, may be developed, while the body and the heart are overlooked; and even the heart may receive consideration, while the training of the body and the mind is neglected.

We first become aware of the presence of the body and for a while it is our chief concern. Later we become conscious of the possession of a mind, and the mind, in time, takes control of the body—woe to the body that is not subject to the decrees of the mind. If the development is normal, we finally note the arrival upon the

scene of the moral man, and the moral man claims the throne—woe to the individual in whom the physical man and the mental man are not obedient to the moral man.

When we come to consider the development of the body, we must again recognize a natural sub-division and consider three factors that enter largely into man's physical welfare, namely, that which we inherit, that which we add, and that which we conserve. In physical appearance, in stature, in our constitutional strength to resist disease and endure fatigue, we are largely according to inheritance. The Bible asks, "Can one add a cubit to his stature?" The question implies a negative reply.

I can testify that one's stature is not of his choosing. When a boy I had my ideal of the physical proportions proper for a man. I wanted to be six feet in height and weigh one hundred and eighty pounds. During the earlier years of my college life I felt confident that I would reach the height desired. I grew very rapidly when about fifteen—so rapidly between September and Christmas that I wrote to my father complaining that my trousers were getting short and asking for money with which to purchase a new pair. He answered that I would come home soon for the holidays and that I could then supply my needs. But my reason for remembering his letter and my rapid growth at that period is found in the words with which he concluded his letter. He said, "But you might as well learn now that people will measure you by the length of your head and not by the length of your breeches."

As I approached maturity I became fearful that I would not reach the six-foot mark. I longed to be a little taller—tried to lift myself up—but with all that I could do I stopped short an inch and a half, and I am not sure that I was pleased when I overran in weight as much as I underran in height.

I repeat that inheritance has stamped certain limitations upon the physical man and yet it is possible to a degree to add to that inheritance. It is not only right but eminently desirable that one should take an inventory of himself at as early a date as possible, and, finding out the weak places, proceed with intelligence and diligence to strengthen them. We should raise ourselves to the highest point of physical efficiency not only that we may render the maximum of service but that we may, as a link in the endless chain of existence, transmit to posterity even a larger store of physical wealth than we inherited.

But I need not dwell upon the first and second factors. The third—the conservation of that which we inherit and of that which we add to it—this deserves special emphasis. It is an awe-inspiring thought that the Creator has put it in our power to dissipate our strength, to destroy the body. If a young man inherits a fortune and squanders it, we say, "Foolish young man;" but only a few in a generation are in a position to throw away a fortune. But every young man when he becomes master of himself is put into possession of a body which is worth more to him than any fortune, and he can waste this body, squander it, throw it away as effectually as one can dispose of a fortune in money—and some do so.

How can I impress upon the young men who honor me by their attention the turpitude of such conduct? How can I better make them conscious of the obligation which possession of such wealth imposes upon them than by showing them how much it costs to raise a boy? Two years ago I heard a statement that is in point here—the strongest statement I have ever heard outside of the Bible. It was this: that the suffering which woman endures as a penalty for motherhood is greater than all the suffering caused by all the wars of all the world—that the agonies which she voluntarily takes upon herself to be the mother of a race surpasses all the agonies of all the battle fields. Is that not a startling statement? And yet, upon reflection, I believe that it is true. We have in the United States more than ninety million of human beings; that means that on more than ninety million of occasions a mother's life trembled in the balance at a child's birth. And this is just the beginning. Compute the value of the time—from a third to a half of the average woman's

life is devoted to the rearing of children. Calculate the worth of the nerve force and energy employed in child raising and then estimate, if you can, the wealth of love that woman pours out upon her children; add all this together and then tell me how much a boy is worth when he is ready to throw himself away!

Is it not strange that any young man would do so? And yet many do. And what is even stranger still, there are those who eagerly assist in the work of ruin—there are those who lie in wait for the young man, set snares for him and make money by dragging him down and shattering the hopes that have been built upon his life! Christians,—for I may assume that I am speaking to a Christian audience,—we have not done all that we might have done to strengthen these young men and save them.

I remember when a boy to have heard my mother tell a story of a very charitable woman who always defended a person criticized in her presence. Her children decided one day to put the mother to test and so, assembling by agreement in her room, they began one after another to find fault with the devil. They had not gone far, however, before the mother stopped them with the remark, "Well, children, if we were all as industrious as the devil is, we would accomplish more." Yes, if we were as industrious in our efforts to save young men as the devil is in his efforts to lead them astray, not so many would go wrong.

A few years ago a conservation congress met at the White House. The governors of the states, the members of congress, and a few not in official life were invited. Experts gave statistics to show how the coal was being consumed, how the beds of iron ore were being exhausted, how the timber lands were being cut over, and how the soil was being wasted. It was an impressive showing, and a deep interest has been taken in conservation ever since. It is an important matter and we owe it to future generations to deal wisely with the natural resources of the country; but what we need most is the conservation of the manhood and womanhood of the land—these are our priceless resources.

But having emphasized the value of the body, I now remind you that the body alone is worthless. No boy would be worth raising if there was nothing more to him than his body. When we give so much time and care to the boy's body it is because we have in mind his mind and at heart his heart.

The development of the mental man next claims our attention, although in this age of intellectual enthusiasm I need hardly discuss the importance of education. And yet with all of our boasted advantages only a small percentage of our boys and girls complete a college course, a very large percentage do not graduate from the high school, and a very considerable proportion do not finish the grades of the common schools. As I have visited different sections of the country I have been impressed by the fact that a majority of the high school students are girls—sometimes the girls outnumber the boys three or four to one. That means that the boys are dropping out, before they even take advantage of the high school course which is brought so close to their homes. Several explanations have been given of this inclination on the part of the boys to quit school at an early age. The first is that parents do not fully appreciate the advantages of the schools and therefore do not bring to bear upon the child the parental influence which should be exerted in the direction of thorough education. Bring me a father who does not understand the value of education and I will attempt to impress it upon his mind by a comparison. There is not a state in the union in which a father is permitted to cut off his boy's arm—not a state in which he would not be punished criminally if he attempted to send his boy out thus mutilated to compete with the boys having two arms. This is the law, and public opinion supports it. And yet in this age the father who would deliberately deny to his boy the advantages of an education and send him out half educated to compete with boys well educated would really be more cruel to his son than the father who cut off an arm.

It is sometimes argued that the boy must be taken from school to assist in the support of the family. If such an excuse is given to me I ask whether it is the boy's father or mother who needs his support. If I am told that the boy is withdrawn from the school that the father may add his wages to his own, I ask what kind of a father he is, whether he is intelligent, industrious and sober. If I learn that an intelligent, industrious and sober father is not able to make a living for his family, I ask what kind of an in-