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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, G. E. HOWARD.
ASSOCIATE EDITOR AND REVIEWER,
EMMA L. WILLIAMS.
LOCAL, AMOS E. GANTT.
ED. P. HOLMES, Business Manager.

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THE DREAMS OF OUR YOUTH.

For I dipt into the future far as human eye could
see:
Saw the vision of the world, and all the wonders
that would be.

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath
not set:
Ancient founts of inspiration well through all
my being yet.

—Tennyson.

The spirit of the age is essentially practical. It is a prosaic spirit. Nothing will satisfy its desire but the tangible, that which can be measured, or reckoned in dollars and cents. The riches of foreign lore are ignored for the dull recipes and maxims of the farm book. Poetry has been robbed of its celestial fire. The poet is no longer a *saeculorum* breathing the divine inspiration of the gods, but a tedious retailer of current events. That which will return a reward today is sought after today. That culture and those aspirations which would lead the possessor to a manhood a hundred-fold more perfect, and add a thousand-fold more to the world's real wealth, in the future, are despised as unreal. To dream is to be ignored by the grasping, bustling mass. To be a dreamer, is to be pitied as a mild fanatic. Is nothing practical or useful which is not practical or useful now?

The world owes more of its enlightenment and happiness to a certain class whom it contemptuously styles "dreamers" than most people imagine. The cold, calculating man or woman with no hopes nor desires beyond the pleasures and honors which increase of riches can supply will sneer when we speak tenderly of our youthful dreams. He will pity us as still an idle dreamer when we say that to the realization of these same dreams, through earnest effort, the world owes its true nobility. It is necessary, however, to explain what meaning is implied in our subject. We will illustrate rather than define.

In the use of the expression, the dreams of youth, we do not mean those wild and capricious fantasies which enable the little boy or girl to see ships and birds, beasts and giants in the tumultuous clouds, and behold starry firmaments and

dazzling pictures in the empty blackness of the night, when with closed eyes he lies upon his pillow and delights in a world of his own creation. Philosophers tell us that this is the result of the too exuberant imagination of childhood. Such indeed are dreams.

We have reference to those dreams rather ideals, which seem to originate in a consciousness of self-power. Those aspirations for an intellectual life, and that determination to obtain a power in the world, which all, perhaps, can faintly understand, and a few have really felt. Those visions which do not capriciously come and go, and change shape and color, but which are ever present, woven into the very fibres of being, the last thought when the soul is folded in the arms of slumber, often the fabric of which sleep's dreams are made, and the first recollection when consciousness returns: the inspiring hope, the unshaken conviction which can make one joyous in sorrow, buoyant in adversity, and elastic in mental toil.

The ideal dream of youth is the image stamped upon the soul of its future possibilities.

It is like the lines which the artist draws upon the block of marble; if every curve and line of grace have been skillfully drawn and clearly discerned, by following them carefully with his chisel, a few weeks of patient toil will develop a beautiful image. So if the youth sees clearly the outline of his future career with his soul's eye, by following these lines rigidly with the chisel of the Will during life, he can shape a lofty and god-like character.

But we are told that the instances on record are rare, where men have acknowledged that they have worked to, and realized an ideal of youth. Ah! yes, the record is silent, but who shall say how many of the great and truly noble whom we delight to honor have, as nearly as possible for an imperfect being, realized their dreams? We believe that, were the truth known, it could be affirmed of all.

He whose determination is once fully formed to attain an exalted station, does not impudently fling his banner to the breeze with the words inscribed thereon: "I will be great, I will be a statesman, an author, a poet!" No, true genius is modest and sensitive.

The youth who has said in his heart—"I will realize a perfect manhood, I will be a leader in this or that sphere"—secretes and jealously guards his resolve deep in his heart. It is sacred to him. If perchance some friend gibes him as to his future career, saying: "doubtless we shall see you a great judge, statesman, or poet"—he blushes in confusion, as if some guilty secret had been discovered. Even, in many cases, his sister, his brother, his parents must not share his secret.

Occasionally, such an one will find a friend of kindred experience to whom he willingly delivers the key to his treasure. O, how delightful the hours they spend together, hand in hand, looking out over the rolling billows of the ocean, which they are about to cross. It is a joy to each that he shall be permitted to temper the storm and point out the breakers to the other. Each finds himself in the other, and the other in himself; and a sweet voice within

"Which whispers friendship will be doubly dear,
To one who thus for kindred hearts must roam,
And seek abroad the love denied at home."

They have thought the same thoughts,

feared the same fears, and delighted in the same pleasures. All their ideals are symmetrical and harmonize each to each. In revealing thoughts which they have scarce dared to think for fear a listener might hear, O, what happiness and joy to feel that they receive appreciation and sympathy! Each gains strength and courage from the other.

What is genius? Genius is the crown which the world places upon the brow of patient toil. Toil is performed under the direction of the will. But what nerves and fires the will? Ah! here is the secret of genius. It is this noble aspiration to attain excellence and power. True greatness is not the result of accident. Men may stumble upon positions of temporary power. A capricious turn of Fortune's wheel, the fickle breeze of public sentiment, or the machinations of a band of schemers or political tricksters, may fling a man unexpectedly into public station; but he who would leave a monument behind him which, like the polished marble columns rising from the site of ancient Thebes upon whose surface thirty centuries have failed to leave a grain of dust, shall defy the dust of ages, or which, as Horace says, "Shall be more lasting than brass," must spend his life in building it. It has not been the chance conception of an hour, but rather he has patiently chiseled it according to the lines he has seen delineated in his youthful horoscope.

Genius nascitur non fit is a more general truth than *Poeta nascitur non fit*. Yet we believe that everyone can attain whatever he set out to reach. Is this statement a paradox? It is the *determination to succeed* that is born. He who feels this power struggling within him, has all that nature betows upon one man more than another. All may not succeed alike. Two persons may be earnestly striving for the same general ideal. Each may see the same picture of his future possibilities in his youthful dream. Yet, though each may realize his hope, one will do so more perfectly than the other, because his model, his picture was more perfect. One possesses the power, which the other does not, to discern all the points of grace and beauty, all the artistic touches which must be given, in order that his work may stand out in bold and beautiful relief; consequently the character which he forms is stronger and more beautiful.

The great secret of the success of him who faithfully strives to realize the ideal of his youth, without which he would fail, is this: He carries the natural goodness, the purity and freshness of ingenuous youth into the sober hours of age. He who hopes to realize a dream conceived in the purity and freshness of his youth must preserve his purity and freshness. He must make his conceptions of honor, and justice a part of his dream. If he abandons these with the approach of age he has effaced all the glory and beauty of his picture. All wild and exuberant excrescences, from the imperfect judgment of youth, might be cut off, but this would only add beauty and strength to his ideal.

The young man of aspiration resolves that, when he arrives at this or that station, or obtains this or that degree of power, his actions shall be governed by principles of integrity. He will be generous, manly and humane. If he enter the profession of the law or politics, he will avoid its vices and perils, and try to

raise his chosen profession to a higher level. He mentally says, "I will win in the battle I have planned, but I will be victor at a sacrifice of no jot of my honor."

The girl also resolves that she will exert the power she gains for good. She has a great mission to perform. She resolves that while she champions the restricted rights and privileges of her sex, that while she demands justice and equality from the watch-towers of the nation, she herself will realize a noble womanhood. She resolves that while she leads woman to a higher conception of her mission and possibilities in life, she will become victress at the sacrifice of no jot of her womanly grace and gentleness. How necessary that these resolutions be realized in order to attain success.

What grand possibilities are before every young woman of aspiration! What gigantic social errors, and false notions in regard to the mission and sphere of woman must be exposed during the present century! The cherished fallacies and pet beliefs, the sacred axioms which have governed the whole social and political world from Abraham to the present day must be proven false. She must engage in labor and undertake tasks to accomplish all this, at the mere mention of which society has heretofore shuddered, and false modesty has veiled her face. She has a work as difficult to perform as to eradicate the convictions and precepts of Religion itself. Unlike the British lord, we could almost wish that we had been born a woman.

Mammon is the mighty iconoclast who destroys the bright ideals of millions.

Said a young man who had abandoned his college course to engage in making money, upon our speaking somewhat loftily of the necessity of acquiring a thorough education in order to attain the greatest success in life—"O, you will get over the wild dreams of your youth. Money is my motto—get money. Money gives honor and power." Yes, lucre is the touchstone which changes the noble resolves of thousands into sordid avarice, and burning lust for the base power which excess of bonds and dollars can bestow! This is the great peril to the intellectual life. We have no desire to emulate the ill-natured fanaticism of Diogenes, the Cynic. The soul is not rendered nobler and stronger by debasing the body or despising the good things of this life. Let the world accumulate riches, and keep on adding to its luxury, beauty and splendor. Every labor-saving invention, every discovery in mechanics, or in the arts and sciences which adds to our comfort, ease or pleasure, really gives the world more time for thought and culture.

But the great danger is that men live in and for their wealth. It is made the end not the means of life. They do not possess their gold, they are possessed by it.

"If wealth had only pleasure to offer as a temptation from intellectual labor, its influence would be easier to resist.

Wealth bears pleasure in her left hand, but in her right hand she bears honor and power. The rich man feels that he can do so much by the mere exercise of his command over the labor of others, and so little by any unaided labor of his own, that he is always strongly tempted to become, not only physically but intel-