What Shall It Profit a Man?

Is it Well to Devote Oneself to Business to the Exclusion of Recreation? Does Not the Mind Require Food Even as the Body? Will Not "Specializing" Lead to Narrowness?

RIDING down town last Thursday evening on the back platform of one of the new "No-pay-no-ride" cars, which require "cash in advance," and which are the joy and delight of the Farnam street car users, the musical editor of The Bee found himself in the company of an interesting group of business men who preferred the joys of the brisk, fresh air, to the comfortable seats inside: to one of these men, the youngest in the group, the writer said: "Are you still working day and night, and all the time, as you were last year?" He replied he was working pretty hard. "Why don't you let up a bit, and not try to do so much?" was asked. The answer came—"After next year I'm going to take it easier." To which the writer replied: "That's what Mr. Harriman said."

Hereupon, one of the older business men laconically suggested: "Well, he did, all right." Comment then ran along on the death of Mr. Harriman; and another of the business men said—"Yes, and that's what Mr. —— said," mentioning a very prominent Omaha man who died during the past year.

Now this younger business man used to be very much interested in musical doings, and is the possessor of musical talent. But his business has crowded the other out.

The same evening, a few of us were discussing vacation trips, and the wife of the manager of a great corporation, made the remark that she knew that had she not insisted on her husband taking a trip to Europe with her, some time ago, he would have been in a sanitarium, with nervous prostration.

About Thanksgiving time the writer was talking to another business man whose name is at the head of a big concern, and who has been identified with Omaha's commercial interests for many years, and asking him why he never did anything in a musical way, nor seemed to take interest in musical happenings any more, the answer was that a grown family, and business cares took all of his time.

And so it goes. And each one is going to take it easier "after next year," or something like that.

And the thought comes to one, especially at this season of the year, when one indulges in retrospection, and when one thinks over the gains and losses (in business parlance), "What shall it profit a man?"

This is the time of year when a man looks over his stock, and tries to clear things, so that he will not have to carry over any more than he can help: it is the time of year when he looks over his accounts, and tries to get all paid in, that he can; so that he will not have to carry any more than is necessary into the new year. This is the pre-inventory time, the winding up of the old, preparatory to opening up the new. And the busy man of affairs, as he looks over the past months, and weeks and days, is anxious to find out the answer to this question, "What shall it profit a man?"

Now there is not a successful business man to-day who has not proved, for himself, the statement that "Man shall not live by bread alone."

No one is more disgusted than a business man, with a person who simply thinks of his stomach. How often you hear the remark in contemptuous tones, "All he thinks of is getting his three meals a day." But man shall not live by bread alone. He needs bread. He needs also other things.

The business man is not satisfied with a machine to work for him: he wants his helpers, his clerks, his bookkeepers to be intelligent: that means, they must think! What does it profit a man if he works without thinking?

Many a business man, and many a professional man, and many a musician can cheerfully and honestly say:—"Well, I think." And they do. But we all probably think of one thing to the exclusion of all others. We think of our business, we plan for our business, we put our mental efforts into the one thing we are working at, for daily bread.

But man shall not live by bread alone. He must have mind-food. When one gets to thinking long and earnestly and exclusively on one thing, he is liable to become fanatical on that subject. Our asylums and our sanitariums are full of people who have thought too much and too long and too earnestly on one thing.

It is all right to "do" one thing: that is specializing. But to think about one thing all the time, that is different. Do you know many medical specialists who make a practice of night calls? Are their hours not more or less limited? Do you not have to go to them, rather than have them come to you?

Occasionally a specialist gets into the habit of thinking all the time about his speciality, and what is the result? Well, it is possible to answer that question in a very practical way. Last winter a physician in Omaha, who lectures to medical students told some of us who were discussing matters of this sort, that there were authenticated cases of men who were great authorities on certain diseases, dying of those same diseases themselves.

We must not think too long, and too earnestly, and too intently on one thing. We must have mind-food. If we have been giving all our thought to our business, we have made a mistake; we must feed our intellects. If we have succeeded in a financial way, and have not added some mental riches, "What shall it profit a man?"

If we starve the flesh, we lose it. If we starve the nerves, we lose them. If we starve the mind, we lose it.

There are many men, business men, professional men, laboring men, who today have lost their minds. And yet they are not in sanitariums nor in asylums. They have retained just enough of the shadow of intellect to be able to remain outside.

When a man is absent-minded, he has lost a certain part of his mind, for the time: his mind is "wandering." When a man is unreasonable, he has lost his reason, along some particular branch.

He may have made a great success in a business way; he may have an automobile or two; he may have a fine home, and he may have a large bank account; but if he is "losing" his mind; if he is not feeding his mental side; if he is starving his intellect; if he never looks into his library once a week; (to say nothing of once a day,) if he is not getting some mental stimulus and some mental food every day; if he is pounding along at the same thought all the time, and making "his mind" attend to "his business," without ever making it "his business" to attend to "his mind," then "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own mind?"

No one wants to lose his reason. No one wants to lose his mind. No one wants to lose his life.

And yet, right here in Omaha, men are seeing other men do these very things, and when the catastrophe happens, they say "What did it profit him? What did it profit him?"

And then they keep on in the same old way, because they think that their cases are different; and anyway,—they are "going to take it easier after next year."

But some one says—"Oh yes, that's all right. I believe that: but I am not so foolish as that. I play bridge: I play a game of poker once in a while: I entertain my friends at the theater, and I run my own automobile. All these things take my mind off my business. I get my rest and recreation that way."

Go slow. Go slow. Be careful. There is a difference between re-action and re-creation. Re-action, is what you are getting. There is no mental food in a game of bridge. There is mental activity, if you play a decent game. But not mental food. Ah, but the theatre? Yes, there some one else has prepared the mental food for you. You enjoy what is being presented, but it is not feeding your intellect.

What you "want" is re-action. What you "need" is re-creation.

You want to absorb what other intellects and other minds have done for you.

What you need to do is to put your thoughts on other things than your business; that is true: but the theater, bridge and the automobile will localize your thought, just as the business does.

What you need to do is to get your thoughts "up." Get in touch with the men who think in higher things. Open the glass doors of your library, and bring out the thoughts of the many wise men who are there. Get away from the stock market into mythology. Read this week your "Christmas Carol" instead of your evening chronicle of murders, suicide, bank robberies, criminal cases, divorces, and what not. Take out your Balzac, or your Dickens, or your Thoreau, or Stevenson, or Kipling, and forget things of the work world.

For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own mind?

Re-creation is what we need. Creating anew, impulses; creating anew, those forces which we are drawing upon every day.

A man cannot keep on drawing on his bank account, unless he keeps on depositing.

A man cannot keep on drawing on his health account, unless he keeps on depositing health forces: a man cannot keep on drawing on his nerve account, unless he keeps on depositing nerve forces: a man cannot keep on drawing on his mental account, unless he keeps on depositing new mind-food, thought-supply.

The banker is not satisfied with the statement that you will deposit "after next year. He says, "Do it Now"! And he emphasizes the "Now"!

But, you say, that is a musician's nonsense. Banks do lots of business on credit: they deal in futurities. Do they?

Well now listen to a musician's common sense. They do not. There is not a bank in Omaha doing business on credit! You may borrow, but you "pay," the moment you "borrow." You pay what they call "collateral." And you say, Wrong again, I don't put up any collateral. Then, if that is so, you put up Yourself! You put up your Integrity. You put up your Moral Worth, and that, be assured, is nicely calculated at the bank: through dealings with the bank, or with parties known by the bank, you have established a moral worth and standing, which you label "Credit" and on that you borrow. It is a current saying among shrewd men, "If you want to keep a good credit, don't use it." An utter stranger cannot borrow!

In conclusion. "Thanksgiving" has just passed. We have all had much to be thankful for. That we live in Omaha instead of Nicaragua is one thing. That we are not destitute is another thing. That we are not dumb, deaf, blind, and crippled is another thing.

That we are rich does not count for so much. That means, we can have all the bread we want. But man shall not live by bread alone.

That we have learning is not enough. That means, we know more than people who are ignorant. But man shall not live by mind alone.

Have we our own souls? That is "The" point.

Do our lives demand Beauty? Or are we content to be without it?

Do we love Good Music?? Or are we content to be without it?

Do we love Flowers? Or are we satisfied without them?

Do we love Poetry?? Or are we content to be without it?

Do we love our families? Our friends, outside the circle of buiness associates? Do we love our workmen, our servants, our fellow men, our so-called enemies? Our sense of Right? Our Ideals? God?

If we have lost the faculty of, the need of, the demand for Beauty, Nature, Good Music, Flowers, Poetry, Family, Fellowmen, we are losing our souls.

We do not have to wait for another world, in which to "lose" our souls.

If we don't lose them here, we don't lose them anywhere.

If we don't find them here, we don't find them anywhere. (Perhaps!)

A merciful Providence may have a place whereby we may find them again in some other sphere. But if it is hard to refind them here, it may be very much harder to find them somewhere else!!

So, What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own Soul?

The Soul of Music is calling to our Souls today. It begins its song with the words, "What shall it profit a man?"

And word to the musical people. Don't let us forget that we also can lose our souls, right here and now, by refusing to obey the soul's dictates.

As musicians, we are probably not tempted by the demon of avarice. But we may be. We may be. The pure white flag of musical purity, Art, has been dragged in the dust many times and oft.

Let us be careful.

But there are other demons, Expediency, for example. We are so apt to ask ourselves, "Is it expedient?" when we should simply ask, "Is it right?"

Another soul-loser is the catering to popular taste, or catering to some one's purse or social standing, regardless of truth. Musicians should not cater. That belongs to the supper room, not to superiority.

Musicians must be superior, not supper-servers; creators, not caterers.

Popularity, even with those who do not know, is another siren which beckons musicians. When this is sought, the soul becomes apprehensive and prepares for flight.

What has been said is no reflection against either social standing or the purse. Social standing, and purses, have ever been just as accessible to the good and true, as to the meretricious and the untrue. Witness our churches and our hospitals, and the many musical organizations and institutions supported in other countries! Purses are philanthropic, and social standing is susceptible, to the good, as well as to the ungood.

What shall it profit a musician if he (or she) gain the whole world with its prestige, and its influence, and its acknowledgement, if the soul be lost? Let us remember also, that the soul is never lost by one supreme plunge; it is never lost by one direct act: it is never lost by the death of a body. It is lost, just like a bank account, by a "series" of withdrawals, or losings, without any compensatory supplyings.

A man may lose a fortune in a day. But does he find it again in a day?

A man may lose his health in a year. But does he find it again in a year?

A man may lose his mind in a decade. But when does he find it again?

A man may lose his soul in a lifetime. But will he find it again?

And all this meditation has come from a thought suggested on the back platform of a street car: "I am going to take it easier, after next year."

What shall it profit a man, if—?

THOMAS J. KELLY.

Musical Notes.

Miss Hopper announces she is prepared to reserve and deliver tickets for the Schumann-Heink concert (January 6, 1910), and suggests the fitness of these tickets for Christmas gifts, either in the family circle or among friends. This item is welcome, for it is certain no musical event of the season is more impatiently awaited. An excellent program opens with the "Vitelia Aria," from the opera "Titus," and includes three additional arias as well as a group of German songs representing Schumann, Schubert, Brahms, Strauss, Weingartner and Wolf. The closing groupe comprises five English songs which cannot fail to reach every heart. Mrs. Katherine Hoffman will preside at the piano. Mme. Schumann-Heink recently sang to an audience of 4,000 at Kansas City; in fact, this great artist has a reputation for capacity houses and no effort will be spared to make her coming known to every music-lover of Omaha. The eastern press declares: "This world-renowned singer has never brought her art to a more exquisite approximation of perfection than this season."

Mr. August Mothe-Borglum will present Miss Marie Meek in a piano recital, assisted by Miss Laura Goetz, soprano (pupil of Miss Anna Bishop); Madame Borglum, accompanist, at the First Baptist church, Thursday evening, December 16. The program follows:

1. Toccata, Opus 46, No. 5.....Leschetizky
   Theme Varie, Opus 16, No. 3.....
   .....Paderewski
2. Es hat die Rose.....Franz
   Serenade .....Massenet
   What is Love .....Gans
3. Aufschwung .....Schumann
   Warum .....Schumann
   Etude, Opus 10, No. 7.....Chopin
   Nocturne, Opus 15, No. 2.....Chopin
   Waltz, Opus 70, No. 1.....Chopin
4. L'Alouette .....Balakirew
   Barcarolle, Opus 50.....Rubinstein
   Scherzo, Opus 16, No. 2.....Mendelssohn
   Concert Etude, Opus 19, No. 2.....Poldini
5. Nymphs and Fauns.....Bemberg
6. Waltz—Blue Danube.....
   .....Strauss-Schulz-Evler

At their recital in the First Congregational church Sunday, December 12, 4 p. m., Martin W. Bush will play: "Suite Gothique" (complete), L. Boellmann; "Pastorale," Franck; "Canon in B Minor," Schumann; "Procession du St. Sacrement," Chauvet; "Canzone della Sera," d'Evry; "Andante," Constabile-Dethier; "Serenade," Miller; "Autumn Sketch," Brewer; "March for Church Festival," Best. Mr. Ellis will sing the "Fifth Psalm," Rebling, and three Christmas songs by Cornelius.

Some Things You Want to Know

The American Congress—Speaker Cannon's Career

The central figure in every discussion of the American congress today is the speaker of the house of representatives, Joseph G. Cannon. "Uncle Joe" is a character. He is as much of a character in American politics as was the rugged Andrew Jackson, the terrible John Randolph of Roanoke or the imperious Roscoe Conkling, and he shares with those three interesting historical personages the distinction of being always positive, never negative. Uncle Joe is a republican, therefore he hates the democratic party and all its works. If he likes a man he will go to any proper length to show his affection. If he disapproves of a man there is no language too severe to express his feelings. Consequently those persons who admire Mr. Cannon accord him a whole-souled and unquestioning loyalty which is akin to infatuation, and those who do not admire him are apt to use the entire supply of invectives in expressing their opinions.

It appears that there are fashions in Cannonism. The speaker can remember when he was hailed all over the country as the ideal leader of the western republicanism—that was before some of the "fair-haired boys of the uplift magazines" were born. He also remembers when he was denounced by a large section of the press and by all democrats as "dirty-mouthed Cannon." Still later the whole country adopted him as its "uncle," and embarrassed him with gifts of homespun suits and yarn socks and hand-knit "galluses," just to show that the country saw in Uncle Joe the incarnation of those homely virtues which all Americans affect to regard so highly. And now Uncle Joe, being the same man and remembering all those things, is being abused by most democrats and some republicans because he is a "czar," and is alleged to have decamped with the liberties of the American people secreted in th same vest pocket where he carries, ready for instant use, cigars. Vermillion county, Illinois, the republican house organization and a perfectly warm estimate of the usefulness to society of Messrs. Bryan, Gompers and La Follette.

There are many men, no doubt, who are able to give a perfectly impartial estimate of Mr. Cannon's ability and statesmanship, but there is none who will do it. Either Mr. Cannon is the good old Uncle Joe who is standing bravely at the head of the conservative forces fighting Bryanism, socialism and the devil, or he is an antiquated tory striving to obstruct every movement in the interest of public progress and modern economics. Of course he is neither one nor the other—he is not the only hope of the conservatism nor the only enemy of progress, for sometimes he is progressive and sometimes he opposes the conservatives. One thing, however, is certain. He is always a republican.

Mr. Cannon will be 74 years old when he celebrates his next birthday, May 8. He was 68 when he was first elected speaker, the oldest man ever called to the chair of the house. Yet he is as vigorous today in mind and body as are most men of 60, and 80 is young in congress. He does not appear to feel the handicap of his years in any fashion, and he is ready at any time to prove to the "insurgents" that he is capable of putting up a very high grade of fight.

He was born in Guilford county, North Carolina, in 1836, of Quaker parents. When he was 4 years old his parents moved to Indiana, his father being opposed to slavery. At 14 years old, Cannon went to work in a country store, and saved his money for the purpose of studying law. When he was 20 he went to Terre Haute to read law in the office of John P. Usher, who was secretary of the interior in the Lincoln cabinet. Later he went to the Cincinnati law school, where he was graduated in 1858. In the same year he removed to Illinois, living for a few months at Shelbyville and then going to Tuscola. In 1861, he was elected state's attorney and was continued in that office until 1868. In 1872 he was elected to congress, where he has served ever since with the exception of the two years of the fifty-second congress. In 1876 he removed to his present home in Danville and abandoned his law practice.

Of the men who served in the Forty-third congress, the first of which Mr. Cannon was a member, but four others remain in public life. William P. Frye was then the chief supporter of Speaker Blaine, Eugene Hale was a republican house leader, Julius Caesar Burrows was "the silver-tongued orator of the house," and Stephen B. Elkins was in the house as a delegate from the territory of New Mexico. Now Frye and Hale represent Maine in the senate, Burrows is a senator from Michigan and Elkins is a senator from West Virginia. There is not a man left in the house who was there when "Uncle Joe" first took his seat. The names Frye, Hale, Elkins and Cannon prove the value, in congress, of long service.

Mr. Cannon served his apprenticeship, as all young congressmen have to do, but it was not long before he was recognized by the leaders as a man of parts. He speedily climbed to a high position on the committee on appropriations, of which he was so long chairman and where he won well-merited reputation as a "watch-dog of the treasury." He was a candidate for speaker in 1889 against Thomas B. Reed and William McKinley, and again in 1899 against David B. Henderson. In 1903 his ambition was realized and he took the chair to preside over the house where he had so long served.

In the stormy days of the Fifty-first congress, when Speaker Reed was revolutionizing the character of the house, Mr. Cannon was the chief floor leader and whip of the party in the consideration of every question but the tariff, where Mr. McKinley led. In one of the hot debates on the question of the power of the speaker to count a quorum and compel the attendance of members, Mr. Cannon replied to a remark of Mr. McAdoo of New Jersey in language described at the time as unprintable. The incident was the cause of a bitter personal quarrel between Cannon and "Billy" Mason of Chicago that day, and led to attacks upon Cannon in all the opposition press of the country, notably the New York Sun. Cannon was renominated for congress the very next day after the incident occurred, and the matter was made an issue in his district. He was defeated that year, 1890, as were most of the republican leaders and all but eighty-eight of the republican representatives in the house. Whether he owed his defeat to the campaign waged upon that incident, or whether it was the result of the general democratic landslide, is a controverted question. At any rate, he was returned to congress in 1892, another democratic year, and has been coming back ever since. No public man in the history of the country has been subjected to a more severe attack by the press than was "Uncle Joe" Cannon in 1890. He was even then "Uncle Joe," and that was twenty years ago.

In that familiar name one finds a key to his character and to his power. He is one of the plain people, a lovable old man, whom his friends adore. Anybody would call him "uncle." Now there isn't a man alive who would dare to address the senator from Maine as "Uncle 'Gene." It would be tantamount to contempt of the supreme court, treason and all high crimes and misdemeanors. Mr. Hale is in the senate what Mr. Cannon is in the house, the chief conservator of the traditions of the party. Yet their methods are as different as are the two houses, or the two men.

Mr. Cannon never encouraged the senatorial ambition. He never looked upon a transfer from the house to the senate as a promotion. Perhaps one of the most remarkable features of his long service is that he always has been jealous of the rights of the house as opposed to the encroachments of the senate. It is true that Mr. Cannon's conception of the scope of the "rights of the house" differs radically from that entertained by many persons, but it is nonetheless true that the speaker of the house guards faithfully what he deems his special trust.

Mr. Cannon is a product of the golden age of the republican party, one of the half dozen men still in public life who entered politics as supporters of Lincoln in his first campaign. But the attitude of the Cannon mind is not so much that of the Lincoln era as of that epoch of fierce party strife which began with the end of reconstruction and ended only with the eclipse of the democratic party during the last Cleveland administration. In those days it meant something to be a party man, and it was disgraceful to be a turncoat. It was the days of straight tickets, no scratching and absolute boss rule. The "independent voter" had not appeared to disturb politicians and the "uplift" and its schemes and plans was unheard of. Mr. Cannon is true to the traditions of his party and he has little patience with new-fangled notions, unless they will serve to advance party interests. Then he is as ready to take up a new idea as anybody could be.

The one thing he does know how to do is to fight. He knows how to deal heavy blows, he knows how to take them. In 1891 Mr. Theodore Roosevelt said: "We cannot escape from the fact that it was no credit to the republican party of the house that Mr. Cannon of Illinois should be one of its leaders." Yet it was not long until Mr. Cannon returned to the leadership as a victor. One of the leaders of the house, Henry Sherman Boutell, has said of the speaker: "He has no cant or hypocrisy. He never poses. He never flatters. He never deceives." And even his bitterest enemies must admit that there is never any difficulty in finding out just where "Uncle Joe" stands. He is again the center of a political fight and the country may be sure that he will not run away from it.

FREDERIC J. HASKIN.

Tomorrow — THE AMERICAN CONGRESS—The Leaders of the Senate.