

The Value and Power of Discipline

The word discipline means to develop by instruction or exercise; or a state of subjection to rule and authority.

While the word has many other shades of meaning, the two given definitions are the meanings with which this thesis deals.

Human abilities and powers like most other things are not so highly developed that they can not be improved. The human being as it comes into this world is ignorant; but by observation and teaching the powers develop, the understanding unfolds until each individual stands before the world learned; equal with his associates, strengthened by the accumulated knowledge of the past together with his original efforts. The value of all discipline lies in this faculty of man-kind to grow and develop in strength and intelligence with experience and teaching.

As there are many forms of most

everything so are there various forms of discipline.

It is obedience to orders from the head of an army down to the private soldier that makes that army powerful and effective. It was a thorough training of the physical powers together with perfect obedience that enabled Alexander with ten thousand men to conquer the vast Persian Empire. So it has been with every successful military chieftain that history records. Discipline makes a unit of the whole command; one in purpose and uniform in action.

But now the ideals for which the world strives are far loftier than military conquerors, driving their energy to seek its victories in new fields. But the discipline that was necessary to be successful on the battle-fields is even more imperative in the fields of thought and action.

The educators, the wage laborers, the agriculturists, and all classes have been taught the necessity of putting their energies in training to be successful in their professions. Although

there can be no exact prescription for success, it is certain that every success is the reward of a thorough preparation. History abounds with the names of men who have risen from poverty and obscurity by the means of diligent training, until success crowned their efforts and erected them monuments that no storm can ever shatter.

The idea of discipline is connected with a master; one whose duty it is to instruct and at the same time compel obedience. But many there are who go through school and college and have learned to do nothing by themselves; who cannot master what is set before them in class and lecture room, all from the lack of early mastery. Thus the teacher does most of the work while the scholar sinks to indolence and obscurity. Thus discipline is required not only as far as prescribed tasks are concerned but to rule over the manners and morals of the young as they develop that they may not be idle nor grow up self-willed, but that the will may be in

trained as well as the intellect instructed.

The guidance of a master is not merely needed to transmit and enforce the accumulated human knowledge. There is power to be transmitted as well. Although knowledge is generally termed power; it may sometimes be a weakness and especially when acquired by the process of cramming. The master's individuality and strength of character may be indelibly impressed upon the minds of his pupils imparting a tonic and force to the pupil himself. The true master concentrates these forces within himself and transmits them to his pupils; so that his strength lies not only in his independent energy but in the ability to instill into others these currents of action. Those of every age who have been most powerful not only in school rooms and colleges but in camps and senates are highly endowed with this gift. And sometimes a single masterstroke from a Luther or a Cromwell concentrates the rising tides of centuries and arouses new ages into life. In the schoolroom

the same is true. An Arnold may impart to his scholars a power that no books can give, and bring to bear vital forces that have been accumulating throughout the ages. We need then the master to instruct the intellect and to give vigor to the will. But when we call the master we are not calling a tyrant. The master acts upon law while the tyrant acts upon self will, and as liberty is founded upon true law, we need the masters authority to keep us free and powerful. All civilization is under rightful authority centered in some head. And the apprentice, the soldier, the citizen, the scholar are exalted, made more powerful, and never degraded by obedience to just discipline. It is not only good manners but it is obvious duty to obey even those who may in some respects be inferior but who do set over us by law. And Young America will some day acknowledge his fallacy in the idea that age and precedent are humbugs and that the height of wisdom lies in doing just what he has a mind to. A private

soldier may be more of a scholar and a gentleman than his captain, but he is not on that account to refuse to obey the orders of his superiors. Of course we submit the more readily to official position when united with intelligence and what we consider right. And approve the various orders of authority that are under every good government. Nature demands unity and order, and so we accept rule in preference to anarchy, imperfect direction as better than none at all. All worldly greatness begins with obedience. Those great men who are raised up in revolutionary times to found new empires are always found well disciplined in obedience. It was so with Cromwell who was an obedient Christian as well as a trained soldier, so it was with Napoleon the trained and obedient scholar of the camp.

Practice applies discipline and makes all its duties easier. We practice what is set before us because we wish to improve. And there may be strength gained by every effort. The value of dis-

discipline is not so much for the present as the future. To be ready when the opportunity or trial is at hand we must be prepared beforehand.

There is not an avocation open to man but that either absolutely requires a thorough training or would be highly benefitted by it. And among all classes needing training today, whose high claim arises from its fundamental importance in the sustenance of the world is the class that tills the soil. A class that should stand high in all the circles of the government and society. An occupation whose charms have captured great men from senates and dictators from supreme power. It is an early and thorough discipline of rights, privileges, and powers of mankind that will broaden the vision, give to all a correct understanding, and give to this class its ancient, right full, and powerful prestige. And give us more Cincinnatti's and fewer demagogues.

An equal training for all would place the world on a level. An intel-

Intellectual and moral training would end our social troubles. The differences between capital and labor would be adjusted without the aid of the strike and the bomb.

Thus may discipline enter the intellectual, moral, and physical energies of mankind uniting their strength and giving unison and force to human development in its search for the exalted summits where wisdom, virtue, farthest vision and highest peace are to be found.

Edmund C. Abbott.