

Chapter 12 — The Inferiority Complex

*of The Mind at Mischief:
Tricks and Deceptions of the Subconscious and How to Cope with Them*
(1929)

by
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Sources for Chapter 12, in the order in which they appear

- (1) William S. Sadler, M.D., "QUIT Picking on Yourself," *The American Magazine* (November 1928, pp. 26-27, 117-18)
- (2) Tom A. Williams, M.B., C.M., *Dreads and Besetting Fears* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company 1923)

Key

- (a) Green indicates where a source author (other than Sadler) first appears, or where he/she reappears.
- (b) Magenta indicates a Sadler text (book or magazine article).
- (c) Tan highlights parallelisms not occurring on the same row.
- (d) An underlined word or words indicates where the two parallel texts pointedly differ from each other.
- (e) Pink indicates passages where Sadler specifically shares his own experiences, opinions, advice, etc.
- (f) Light blue indicates passages which strongly resemble something in the Urantia Book, or which allude to the Urantia phenomenon.

- (g) **Red** indicates either: (1) an obvious error on Sadler's part, brought about, in most cases, by miscopying or misinterpreting his source, or (2) Sadler's use of an earlier text of his that contained time-bound information which he didn't revise when presenting it in *The Mind at Mischief*, resulting in a historical impossibility, or (3) Sadler's use of an earlier text of his which he revised in such a way as to contradict that earlier text.
- (h) **Gold** highlights key words or themes which will be discussed in the analysis of the chapter.

Matthew Block
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X I I — T H E I N F E R I O R I T Y C O M P L E X

[See Chap. 13.]

12:0.1 IN a subsequent chapter I shall treat of conscience as a health problem; at this time I wish to discuss more particularly certain minor personal tendencies that are also sometimes involved with conscientious scruples, but more particularly those that are associated with the *inferiority complex*.

[Compare 4:2.1.]

12:0.2 We must remember that the child, as it thrives in the nursery, is, in its own eyes, all but omnipotent. It is the center of the universe; all the world revolves about it for its pleasure and entertainment. Now, as the child begins to emerge into the real world, it meets with many a setback; many a hard slap its self-confident ego is destined to receive, and if, at about this time, it has a great many fears suggested to it, the result is very likely to be the beginning of an inferiority complex.

12:0.3 Inferiority complexes are especially likely to arise in diffident, backward children, more particularly if they are permitted to undertake tasks beyond their age and ability. It is a calamity for any child to engage in school work which is utterly beyond its grasp. If failure is inevitable, the child is apt to accept this defeat as typical of what it may expect throughout life, and thus begin to reckon itself as more or less a complete failure.

12:0.4 Parents and teachers should be very careful to encourage children always to go through with what they undertake, and, of course, that entails the responsibility of seeing that they do not undertake the impossible. I find that a great many cases of inferiority complex come from the early memory-association of making a failure of something undertaken. Careful inquiry shows that many times the child was allowed to undertake something that was utterly beyond its powers at that age.

12:0.5 Another contributing factor to the inferiority complex is the impatience of parents and teachers, particularly of parents. A mother assigns some task to her daughter; the father sets some piece of work before his son; and then, as the hours pass, and the children make more or less of a failure of the undertaking, the parents become impatient and take the work away from them, expressing their disgust in such hasty remarks as: "Oh, let me finish it. It takes less time to do it than to show you. You are so dumb"; or, "I can't wait. It takes you so long to do it. What's the matter with you, anyway?" Most of us forget how it was when we were children and had to learn to do things. It behooves parents and teachers to have more patience with children, for an outburst of this sort under just the right circumstances may lay a firm foundation for a lifelong inferiority complex, or at least a complex that will live to torment the child until, as an adult, he gradually masters this tendency to self-depreciation or receives help from some psycho-therapist.

THE STIMULUS OF SUCCESS

“QUIT Picking on Yourself” (*The American Magazine*, November 1928)

[contd] RALPH was next to the youngest in a very gifted and talented family of nine children.

Among his older brothers and sisters were the champion debater of the local high school, an athletic brother who had all but broken a half-dozen track records, a sister who was a talented musician, and another sister who was no mean painter.

But Ralph didn’t seem to have any special gifts.

He used to hear his father and mother remark on the fact that he didn’t appear to be as talented as the other children, and wonder what he would ever amount to.

Naturally, poor overshadowed Ralph grew up with the feeling that he was practically a nit-wit (*QPY* 26).

12:1.1 I want to tell you about the case of a young man whom, for our purposes here, we will call Ralph.

Ralph was next to the youngest of a family of nine children, a very gifted family.

Among Ralph’s older brothers and sisters were the champion debater of the local high school, an athletic brother who had broken half a dozen track records, a sister who was a talented musician, and another sister who was no mean painter.

But Ralph didn’t seem to have any outstanding talents.

He used to hear his father and mother remark on the fact that he wasn’t as gifted as the other children, and wonder what he would ever amount to.

Now, Ralph was already overserious, had a tendency to be hyperconscientious,

and so, as he grew up, he became convinced that he was all but a “no-gooder”

and that if he didn’t watch his step he would be a ne’er-do-well.

He didn’t seem to be able to put his mind on anything he would like to be, or to grasp anything he really could do well.

SOURCE

[contd] Although he finished high school with fairly good grades, he refused to go to college.

He was afraid he would flunk and disgrace the family.

So he went to work in the business world and developed more and more into a melancholy lad, with repressed emotions. By the time he was twenty he had a first class, A-No. 1 inferiority complex working twenty-four hours in the day (*QYP* 26).

[contd] Ralph became so nervous and despondent that his father brought him to me, saying, “Doctor, there must be something wrong with this boy. He is so unlike his brothers and sisters.

He doesn’t seem to take an interest in anything,

and he is getting worse” (*QYP* 26).

[contd] A thorough overhauling of Ralph revealed just one thing—a deep-seated, well-grounded inferiority complex.

He felt he was destined to be a failure in life, and that settled it.

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

12:1.2 He became so depressed that after he finished high school—and he finished with fairly good grades—he refused to go to college.

He subsequently told me he was afraid he couldn’t get through and didn’t want to flunk and disgrace the family.

He could have gone through college just as well as his other brothers and sisters.

But he went to work in the business world and developed more and more into a melancholy lad, with repressed emotions; by the time he was twenty he had a first-class, A-No. 1 inferiority complex,

and was also beginning to get his conscience mixed up with it.

12:1.3 This was about the time that Ralph’s father brought him to me, remarking: “Doctor, there must be something wrong with the boy. He is so unlike his brothers and sisters.

He doesn’t seem to take an interest in anything.

He has always been rather odd and peculiar.

We don’t understand him, and he is getting worse.”

12:1.4 A thorough overhauling of Ralph revealed just one thing, and that was his deep-seated inferiority complex.

He knew to an absolute certainty that he was a failure in life, that he never would amount to anything, never excel in anything, and that settled it.

SOURCE

When he opened up to tell his story, he wept profusely about it.

He had often thought of running away from his family to save them from the humiliation of his presence, but he doubted his ability to make a living.

His inferiority complex kept him from picking up and striking out for himself, which in his case would have been the making of him. It was impossible to talk him out of his melancholy state (*QPY* 26).

[contd] I had several conversations with his mother, and learned that the only thing for which he had been commended in high school was his essays.

Thereupon I conceived the idea that he might have some latent ability as a writer.

I thought I would take a chance and try to develop it, so I sent for Ralph and pitched right into him.

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

When he opened up to tell his story, he wept profusely about it.

He felt that he was a disgrace to the family.

He had often thought of running away to save them the humiliation of his presence, but he doubted his ability to make a living.

His inferiority complex kept him from picking up and striking out for himself, which would have been a good thing.

12:1.5 After several months' efforts to talk him out of this state of mind, to show him that we could not all be talented specialists—that there was a place in the world for the ordinary plodders, and that persistence would achieve success sooner or later—I was compelled to recognize that we were not getting anywhere. The boy was no better, and I decided that something radical had to be done. I figured out that we would have to find something he could really do, and help him to achieve some degree of success in that undertaking, in order to counteract this deep-seated inferiority complex.

12:1.6 I had a conference with his mother and with one of the older sisters, and learned that, all the way through high school, about the only thing for which he had been commended was his essays.

This gave me the idea that he must have latent ability as a writer.

I thought I would take a chance and try to develop it; so I sent for Ralph and pitched right into him.

SOURCE

I asked him to produce a thesis of some sort within thirty days and submit it to me.

He did, and for a first attempt it was quite good.

After criticizing it and having it revised, I asked him to write a second one, and then a third. The third struck me as being good enough to sell.

But Ralph started in at his old tricks. No; he had no interest in such things; it wasn't good anyway; it would come back; he couldn't write—thus ran the tenor of his comments.

But I insisted that he send his manuscript to a list of magazines (*QPY* 26).

[contd] FIVE times the article was rejected, but the sixth time a check for fifty dollars came.

Ralph came over to see me.

I never saw such a change in a human being in my life.

There was fire in his eyes, his face was lighted with enthusiasm,

even the tone of his voice had changed.

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

I ordered him to produce a thesis of some sort within thirty days and submit it to me.

He did it, and I saw I was on the right track.

After criticizing his production and having it revised, I ordered a second one, and then a third, and the third struck me as being of sufficient merit to warrant an effort to market it.

No; he had no interest in such things—it wouldn't do any good—the manuscript would come back—he couldn't write—that was just a foolish notion I had.

I even had to suggest a list of magazines to which he should send his article.

12:1.7 Five times the article went out and came back, and the sixth time a check for \$50.00 came.

The young fellow called me up on the telephone the moment he got through pinching himself to find out if it were really a fact that he had received \$50.00 for an article he had written.

As soon as he could get away from work that day, he came out to see me.

I never saw such a change in a human being in all my life.

There was fire in his eyes, and his face was lighted with enthusiasm, illuminated with joy.

The tone of his voice had changed.

The expression of his face was that of another man.

SOURCE

Clenching his fist, he pounded the desk, and said, "Gee, but it's great to find out you can do something! I have thought of half a dozen other things I want to do.

I'm going to sit on top of the world from now on" (QPY 26).

[contd] Well, that is about all there is to this story.

Ralph's promotions have been rapid.

He has a position of trust with his firm,

and has written two books and scores of magazine articles.

He has no desire to give up his connection with the business world to become an author.

He knows that he is not a literary world-beater, but his writing serves as an emotional outlet, an avenue of self-expression.

It is the club that successfully swatted his inferiority complex, and beat it into a shapeless pulp (QPY 26).

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

Then, clinching his fist, he pounded the desk and said: "Gee, but it's great to find out you can do something! I have thought of half a dozen other things I can do now,

and I am going to make a success of the job I have.

I am sitting on the top of the world.

I'll tell the world I can climb to the top of this concern I am working for."

12:1.8 That is about all there is to the story. One little trick had done the business.

Ralph's promotions have been rapid.

Only a few years have gone by, but he has a high position of executive responsibility with his firm.

He has written two books since then, and scores of magazine articles.

He has no desire to give up his connection with the business world to become an author.

He knows that he will probably not be a world-beater as a writer, but writing is an emotional outlet, an avenue of self-expression.

It gives him confidence in himself.

It is the club with which he has beaten that inferiority complex into a shapeless pulp, and he cherishes it.

12:1.9 He has recently become an amateur champion in one of the outdoor sports, and last year he was elected president of a men's club. Not long ago he decided to take some music lessons and see if he couldn't make the musical sister a little envious. I remember so well his telling me years ago that he never could be married. No woman would ever care for him, and besides he didn't want to help bring any children into the world to suffer as he had suffered, and so on. Now I have the announcement of his marriage. He is simply a changed personality. Finding out that he could write an article that a magazine would pay for and publish was the turning-point in his life.

12:1.10 What a great mistake parents make to let their children overhear any expression of lack of confidence in a child's future! What a mistake to make comparisons within the hearing of the children! Parents and educators must learn to reckon with the possibility of the development of inferiority complexes, and see to it that they do not needlessly contribute to their creation.

[contd] While it may be a bit far-fetched for parents to try to raise every boy with the Presidency of the United States in view, it is better to suggest the improbable, and even the impossible, to our children, rather than speak to them in a disparaging and discouraging way about their future prospects.

It is easier to curb an exaggeration of ego in a child than fight an inferiority complex (*QPY 26*).

It may be a bit far-fetched to raise every boy with the idea that he can become President of the United States, but it is better to suggest the improbable and even the impossible to our children, sometimes, than to have them hear us speak disparagingly of their prospects.

It is better to make the mistake of overencouraging, even at the risk of exaggeration of the ego, than to contribute to those depressing reactions of childhood which can so easily develop into an inferiority complex.

A STORY OF DEFEAT AND TRIUMPH

[See 10:4.6.]

12:2.1 A few years ago I met a timid, more or less backward sort of young man, then about twenty-five years old, who told me the following story: He was always easily embarrassed, sensitive, had trouble when a boy in reciting at school; did not take part in the athletic sports and the rougher games, but was a good student and finished high school with honors. He went out into the business world, slowly made a position for himself in a large corporation, and seemed to be outgrowing his mild inferiority complex, tho he still thought that other boys could do things better than he. For years he had harbored the delusion that all the world was down on him.

12:2.2 Everything was going along fairly well until one Sunday morning, as he lay in bed reading the Bible, he ran across the verse which says, "Pride goeth before a fall." It was unfortunate that this had to happen just when it did, for the preceding Saturday afternoon he had been brow-beaten by a department head—unmercifully berated, told that he was a dumb-bell, a numskull, and would never succeed in life. In the evening he had gone out in the park for a long walk, had clenched his fists and talked out loud to himself, had literally pumped courage into his moral veins, and had determined that he would hold his head high and succeed in spite of his hereditary handicaps and all the unfavorable things that had been told him that afternoon.

The shock, however, had shaken him, and when he read that text on Sunday morning, an ignorant **conscience** gave him an unfortunate twist; he was led to believe that the courageous fight he was putting up was merely pride, the assertion of an unregenerate human mind, and that a great smash-up awaited him.

12:2.3 That afternoon he sought consolation of the clergy, but he must have met a sky-pilot who had little or no training in human psychology, as he emerged from this conference all the more downcast and dejected; but since his mind was running in religious lines he sought consolation at an evening church service, and again fate seemed to be against him. The sermon that he heard was, no doubt, a wonderful one, judging by what he told me; but the text happened to be, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." This was the last straw. The young man spent most of the night agonizing, praying, and crying. He never reported back to his position. He wandered about in the parks for a week or ten days, then drew his savings out of the bank, and as long as they lasted—almost two years—he drifted about the country, downcast and dejected.

12:2.4 He finally landed back in Chicago, and, still feebly seeking help, fell into the hands of an uneducated but zealous and understanding city missionary, who gave him an entirely new vision of the mission of religion. The new friend must have been an inspiring sort of person, for he certainly put courage and determination into the soul of this young man; it was this same untutored but nevertheless wise missionary, who suspected something might be wrong with the man physically,

and advised him to seek medical assistance—a turn which explains my connection with this interesting case.

12:2.5 There were some really handicapping physical ailments, I found, but they were soon remedied, and the patient was started on the road to success. His missionary friend helped to inspire him with courage and religious enthusiasm. I was able to improve his physical health and to reeducate his conscience and his sense of moral values and proportions. Within six months he was back on the job with the corporation for which he formerly worked. His progress was rapid. He had his inferiority complex well in hand, and as the result of his three years of unfortunate experience, his transient defeat, he had learned the lesson of his life.

12:2.6 He had learned that dignity of personality was compatible with the humility of Christianity. He had learned how to assert his personal rights and claim his social privileges without having a misinformed conscience accuse him of spiritual pride and sinful egotism. To-day this young man is at the head of his department—has the job of the fellow who so maltreated him several years ago.

[!]

[contd] We should all be willing to recognize and admit our shortcomings and faults; but when we get into the habit of *picking* on ourselves, finding fault with ourselves over trifles; when we feel on an equality with the worms—there's trouble ahead (QPY 26).

It is a praiseworthy trait to be willing to recognize and admit your short-comings and faults; but it is a blighting curse to fall into the habit of *picking on yourself*—finding fault with yourself over trifles.

ARE YOU UNFAIR TO YOURSELF?

[contd] AS a physician, I am constantly meeting hyperconscientious individuals, who, having done their best, always blame themselves for not having done better.

I recently asked a middle-aged woman patient what her real trouble was and, after thinking for a moment, said:

“Well, I guess my difficulty is that I am never satisfied with anything I do.

Even when I know I’ve done my best, I feel I might have done better, and blame myself for my deficiencies” (*QPY* 26).

12:3.1 There is the hyperconscientious type of person who, having done his best, always blames himself for not having done better.

Just yesterday in the office I asked a middle-aged woman what her real trouble was, and after thinking for a moment, she said:

12:3.2 “Well, Doctor, I guess my difficulty is that I am always in trouble with myself. I am never satisfied with anything I do.

I suppose I have an inferiority complex.

When I do my best, all I can do is to see where I could have done better, and blame myself for the deficiency which I think I recognize.”

12:3.3 An inferiority complex is bad enough to have, but when it becomes associated with conscience—that is, when you attach moral responsibility to your supposed inferiority—then it is a calamity. Possessors of such a complex need to build up a broad, philosophic mode of thought. They must recognize that, as the days go by, they are doing the best they can in accordance with their endowment and with the light which they have for guidance, and that no one else can do better, not even an angel; they should accept their acts and efforts, as they view these in retrospect, as being the best that are humanly possible, and stop this practise of picking on themselves.

SOURCE

[contd] Now, people who fall into this terrible rut of chronically chiding themselves are never going to amount to anything. Just because they can't write like Shakespeare or play like Kreisler is no reason why they should crawl into their holes and sit bemoaning their fates. I don't believe in smug self-satisfaction, but I do believe in a wise understanding of our limitations (*QPY* 26).

I have a patient who is too conscientious over his decisions. He is afraid he will decide things wrongly.

He worries all day over trifles. If he goes to buy a suit or a hat, he has to go back two or three times (*QPY* 117).

[contd] "The best thing you can do," I said to him, "is to flip a coin when you want to decide some minor affair."

Now, when some trifle comes up, it is "Heads I do and tails I don't."

He is getting over the idea that every little thing in life is important (*QPY* 117).

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

I am not making any plea here for the cultivation of an exaggerated ego or a swelled head.

But I am saying a word to comfort and encourage those who fall into the terrible habit of chronically chiding themselves when they have done their best. Be frank with yourself, but also be fearless and fair with yourself.

12:3.4 Here is another patient, who is overconscientious about his decisions. He is afraid he will decide things wrong.

He thinks all day over trifles. If he undertakes to buy a suit or a new hat he has to go back two or three times.

He has had three good chances to marry that I know of, and has lost them all because he couldn't make a decision, couldn't decide whether it was the wise thing to do.

I am trying to help him by getting him to take a whole group of his minor affairs and decide them by tossing a coin.

If he goes out for a walk and comes to a fork in the road, he will actually stand still, trying to decide which way to turn;

now I have him take out a coin and toss it—"Heads to the right, tails to the left."

He is getting over the idea that every little thing in his life is important.

I suppose this state of mind comes from thinking we are so important ourselves.

12:3.5 I remember the case of a young man who couldn't keep his room in order, who would never put anything back in its place. The fault was so serious that his mother thought there must be something vitally wrong with his mind. I found the boy normal in every way, mentally and physically, but gave him a good talking to. Evidently I succeeded, for his mother came back later and asked me to undo what I had done; it seems that he had gone home, picked up his things, put his own room in order, and then gone after the whole house with a thoroughness that upset the entire family. I had told him that order was the first law of heaven, and that his character would never develop properly unless he was orderly. The medicine was a little too potent in his case. It is all right to teach a stoop-shouldered man to stand straight, but there is no sense in his standing so straight that he falls backward.

12:3.6 What we need is to get to the bottom of these matters from a philosophic standpoint, to recognize that **conscience** belongs in the domain of right and wrong, and that it is not intended to function in every trifling decision of every-day life. It should leave some work for **common sense** to do.

MISPLACEMENT OF THE CONSCIENCE

[contd from 12:3.3] I have a dear friend who is a bit of a problem to me.

He makes life miserable for himself and others by continually apologizing.

I never meet him that he does not apologize for something or other.

He is always afraid that he has hurt someone's feelings or slighted a friend in some way or other. He cannot get into a good-natured discussion and take sides without apologizing for his opinions, which, he fears, may wound the susceptibilities of someone present.

It's getting beyond a joke. He'll soon be apologizing for encumbering the earth (*QPY 26*).

[contd] I've told this man that, in order to cure himself of this distressing habit, he'll have to follow, for a time at least, the advice of the famous man who said, "Never apologize and never explain." It's going to be hard, but having got off on the wrong foot something drastic has to be done. I believe in apologies when apologies are due; but there is no need to explain and apologize every step of the way (*QPY 26*).

12:4.1 I have a dear friend whom I don't know how to help, but I am going to undertake it some day.

He is making life miserable for himself by continually apologizing.

He is perpetually afraid of offending someone.

I never meet him without hearing him apologize for something.

Now, I know his conscience is not overdeveloped along many lines; I can think of one or two matters about which it would be well for him to have a little more conscience;

but this fear of hurting somebody's feelings—of slighting someone—is his conscientious fad,

and it is getting to be a joke among his acquaintances.

SOURCE

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

12:4.2 How can I help this man? When the opportunity comes, I will undertake a program which has been successful in many other cases of this sort;

It's a curious thing about this man: although he has an inferiority complex he is, at the same time, the victim of an inflated ego. The fact that he feels everyone is criticizing his conduct or feeling slighted over some little lapse of courtesy on his part shows how important he imagines himself to be in the lives of others. A deflation of his ego will put him on the right road to solving his problem, because just as soon as he realizes that everything he does is not so all-fired important to others, he won't feel the need to explain and apologize (*QPY* 26-27).

I will try to deflate his ego a bit, to explain that every little thing he does is not so all-fired important that everybody is paying attention to it;

and then follow up this line of treatment with the further suggestion that most people have **common sense**, that they do not wear all their nerves on the outside of the body, and that they have bigger business to attend to than to sit around waiting for him to hurt their feelings. This is the treatment that seems to work best in mild cases of that sort.

X: HEREDITY AND FEAR (Williams 126)

There are instances when even the moral training of a child necessary to inculcate principles of truth and honor may be overdone, as in the case of a little girl,

12:4.3 Recently I came across a very peculiar case of conscience and worry.

It was that of a woman of twenty-five who worried about exaggeration. In her younger days, it seems, she had a very active imagination. It was almost impossible for her to tell a story straight; her imagination insisted on embellishing and fixing it up so that it was just a little better than the original.

who when discovered in a prevarication, was told the story of Ananias and Sapphira and that they were struck dead for telling a lie.

She was severely scolded for this,

and by and by, as she grew up, she decided to make an honest effort to overcome the tendency. She became very accurate and matter-of-fact in her narratives.

This so preyed upon the imagination of the child that her suffering became intense, not only because of her past sins of like nature; for thereafter she became so overscrupulous that she was unable to make the slightest mis-statement or exaggeration without bringing the matter up later for correction, even though the occasion was so trivial it made her seem quite ridiculous (W 136-37).

Then presently she swung to the other extreme and grew hyperconscientious about details. She would start out to tell a story, and would say, "There was a large crowd present." Then she would stop and correct herself: "Well, now, it wasn't really a large crowd. There were probably twenty-five or thirty people." Then she would hesitate again, and add: "Well, to be exact, there were less than twenty." This, of course, became a nuisance; it was a jest with all her friends, but she was training herself to tell the truth. She has succeeded in that, but can no longer tell an ordinary joke without spoiling it by stopping repeatedly to correct herself.

12:4.4 The Lord knows we need more accuracy, more careful observation, more truthfulness. One does not have to attend many trials in the courts to learn that people are very careless in their observation, and still more careless in the relation of what they have seen; but it is too bad that the craving for accuracy should be carried to the point where it interferes with one's ability to tell a good story. There is such a thing as being too everlastingly truthful.

12:4.5 I appreciate that I am treading on delicate ground when I talk about conscience and amusements. Some people think anything is legitimate as an amusement. They can indulge in cabaret parties, sprees, and other excesses. I am not making a plea for anything outside the pale of common sense and every-day decency; but, on the other hand, I feel sorry for those overserious souls who miss so many of the harmless pleasures of life, who shut themselves off from almost all forms of entertainment, because their conscience tells them that such things are wrong. I simply can't come to believe that everything enjoyable is wrong.

12:4.6 At the present time I have a patient who needs to have a little entertainment, a little diversion. She should have something to break the monotony of her life, but I am finding it exceedingly difficult to hit upon anything that her conscience will let her do, and I dislike to get into a controversy with her conscience at this stage of the undertaking. So far, practically everything I have suggested that she might do she has turned down because she doesn't approve of it.

We have to be careful how we break down conscience barriers, especially with young people, because if we break them down legitimately in a few cases, we establish a precedent that may encourage them to override conscience in its legitimate domain. It takes time to reeducate conscience.

12:4.7 Here is a singular case: a woman whose life has been almost spoiled, who seldom enjoys any recreation because she thinks so much about those who do not have such pleasures. When she goes to a picnic she almost gets indigestion thinking about the poor people who cannot have outings. She can hardly enjoy an automobile ride, thinking of the few people who do not have automobiles. She wonders if it is right to have luxuries when there are so many who hardly have necessities. In general, this is a commendable mental attitude; but the woman in question does not stop with being charitable. She has allowed herself to dwell on these ideas until they have ruined her health, as well as her happiness. She is kind-hearted and unselfish, but, because of an excess of conscientiousness, she is not only helping no one else, but is spoiling her own joy of living.

IN THE BUSINESS WORLD

QUIT Picking on Yourself? (*The American Magazine*, November 1928)

[contd from 12:4.2] RECENTLY I met a business man who picked on himself so hard that he made himself sick. He worried over minor things in his business dealings. He kept debating with himself as to whether this or that particular transaction was absolutely right and fair.

Finally, he reached a point where to make a profit in a business transaction was wrong; he was taking unfair advantage of his fellow men (*QPY* 27).

[contd] This attitude of mind, of course, couldn't continue, if the man was to keep his health and his business. A number of conversations revealed the trouble. He had had his mind stirred up on this subject by a verse in the Bible condemning usury.

12:5.1 I hesitate to tell a story of too much conscience in business, as there certainly should be more conscience in most of the business we see going on;

but some time ago I met a man who had made himself sick by worrying over minor points in his dealings—as to whether they were right or wrong, fair or unfair.

For years he had been indulging in this overconscientious worry, and we finally helped him by asking him to apply the Golden Rule—to think whether he would be satisfied if he were treated in the same way, and if he would, to go ahead.

He had reached the point where to make a profit in a business transaction was to do wrong, to take advantage of his fellow men;

the Golden Rule finally straightened him out.

12:5.2 It is indeed remarkable how the commercial consciences of men can vary.

I might say that this man had his mind first stirred up by a verse in the Bible condemning usury.

SOURCE

He began worrying about what usury was. And the more he worried, the more run-down he became (*QPY 27*).

[contd] Finally, he fell a victim to the idea that any reasonable profit was profiteering.

When we once got to the bottom of his trouble it was just a question of bringing him back to normalcy again by building up his health and disabusing his mind of the profiteering idea.

Eventually he saw things from a common-sense viewpoint (*QPY 27*).

[contd] A lot of our troubles could be side-stepped if we would only check ourselves up in reference to common sense.

The average viewpoint is usually fairly sane, natural, and normal, and we should always take stock of ourselves when we move very far to either extreme as regards normal reactions of normal men and women to the problems of daily life (*QPY 27*).

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

He began worrying about just what usury was, and with his nerve-tone run down, suffering more or less from nervous exhaustion,

he fell a victim to this worry over profiteering.

It is only just to state that in the task of reeducating his mind on ethical values, we were aided by the fact that

he had sufficient physical attention to build up his nerve-tone

and thus to look at things from the viewpoint of **common sense**.

12:5.3 A lot of these troubles could be side-stepped if we would only use **common sense**.

The average viewpoint is fairly sane and normal, and we should always take stock of ourselves when we move very far toward either extreme in our reactions to the problems of daily life.

There are few cases, however, like that of the man whose story I have just told. For every one I meet like him, I meet a hundred who would do themselves no harm if they allowed a little more conscience to run through their commercial transactions.

HOW ONE CASE STARTED

[contd] While writing this article, I received a letter from a woman, now almost fifty years of age, in which she tells the story of the gradual development of an inferiority complex.

The letter is helpful, as it shows how such a complex develops.

She says:

“When I was a child, if I complained of pain or of feeling tired, my mother would say, ‘You’re just like your aunt Emma. She always had pain somewhere, and she never amounted to anything.’

My parents were always too tired or too irritable to hear of my troubles, so I began to shut up like a clam.

I remember what a tremendous impression it made on my young mind when my parents would say, ‘It is strange she hasn’t any common sense.’

And sometimes they would startle me by exclaiming, ‘Haven’t you any sense at all?’

I really believe that this fear of not having the average common sense has been sticking in my mind ever since (*QPY 27*).

[contd] “BUT the climax came when I was fourteen and my father punished me severely for something I did not do.

12:6.1 **Just this morning** I received a letter from a woman, now almost fifty years of age, in which she tells of the gradual development of an inferiority complex.

Her letter is helpful in that it serves to show how such things begin early in life.

This woman says, in substance:

12:6.2 “When a child, if I complained of pain or of feeling tired, my mother would say, ‘You are just like your Aunt Emma. She always had pain somewhere, and she never amounted to anything.’

My parents were always too tired or irritable to hear of my troubles, so by and by I began to shut up like a clam, and said nothing to anyone.

But I remember what a tremendous impression it made on my young mind when my parents would say, ‘It is strange she hasn’t any common sense.’

And sometimes they would startle me by exclaiming, ‘Haven’t you any sense at all?’

And I really believe that the fear thus implanted—the fear of not having average common sense—has been sticking in my mind, beneath the surface, ever since.

12:6.3 “But the climax came when I was fourteen and my father punished me severely for something I did not do.

SOURCE

This punishment was very humiliating, and it caused me not only to distrust parental love but it was a great blow to my personality (*QPY 27*).

[contd] “In this state of mind I did not get along well at school, so my parents decided I should go to work.

I was too cowed, too afraid to say anything; but I did a lot of thinking.

I was put to work in a factory.

Up before six o’clock in the morning, and worn out at night, too tired to make any trouble, I guess, when I got home.

About this time I got hold of a book that gave me a little religious consolation, or I don’t know what would have happened.

The people with whom I worked were all older than I, and I was so green that I afforded them a great deal of amusement. This all contributed to the formation of a deep-seated inferiority complex (*QPY 27*).

[contd] “About this time something went wrong with my heart, and I couldn’t work regularly;

and then, when I would stay home, I can remember hearing them say, ‘Well, she can work when she wants to.

I don’t see where she gets this lazy streak’ (*QPY 27*).

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

This punishment was very humiliating, and it caused me to distrust parental love. It was also a great blow to my personality.

12:6.4 “In this state of mind I did not get along well at school, and my parents decided I should go to work.

They said they were determined to see if I was good for anything. This increased my humiliation and stirred rebellion in me.

I was too cowed, too afraid to say anything; but I did a lot of thinking.

I was put to work in a factory.

Up before six o’clock in the morning, worn out at night, I was too tired to make any trouble, I guess, when I got home.

About this time I got hold of a book that gave me a little religious consolation, or I don’t know what would have happened.

The people that I worked with were all older than I, and I was so green that I afforded them a great deal of amusement; but it all contributed to the formation of a deep-seated inferiority complex.

12:6.5 “About this time something went wrong with my heart, and I couldn’t work regularly.

When my infirmity kept me at home, I heard them say: ‘Well, she can work when she wants to.

She works long enough to get something, and then she loaf.

I don’t see where she gets this lazy streak.’

SOURCE

[contd] “In a short time I found lighter work at very small wages, and this also contributed to lowering my self-respect. But I sometimes wonder what I might have been if I had only had a reasonable chance (QPY 27).

[contd] “I am afraid to trust my own judgment. I don’t want to face any responsibility (QPY 27).

[contd] “Even when people try to be nice to me, I have such a twisted view of things that I am afraid. I think it is because they are sorry for me, because they pity me.

I recall what my (Continued on page 117) mother once said to me: “Oh, they don’t want you, they just asked you because you hung around, and they had to get rid of you” (QPY 27, 117).

[contd] “I notice every little seeming slight.

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

In a short time I found lighter work, but at very small wages, and this contributed greatly to lessening my self-respect.

As things now stand, I find myself all but hopelessly handicapped with the following fears:

12:6.6 “1. I am afraid to trust my own judgment. I shun decision. I don’t want to face any responsibility.

12:6.7 “2. I am afraid to trust my friends. I have reached the place where I doubt if I have any real friends, and I just can’t bring myself to trust anyone fully.

When people try to be nice to me, I have such a twisted view of things that I think it is because they pity me,

because they look upon me as my parents did in earlier years,

when my mother once said to me: ‘Oh, they don’t want you, they just asked you because you hung around and they had to get rid of you.’

And another time she said: ‘You think that other people think so much more of you than your own folks, but you will find some day that they don’t.’

12:6.8 “3. I notice every little seeming slight.

I don’t expect people to be friendly just for the sake of friendship, and I am looking for slights.

SOURCE

I am very sensitive, and exceedingly self-conscious (*QPY* 117).

[contd] “It is hard for me to receive a favor and feel that it is given in friendship, or that I in any way deserve it.

I always feel that everybody is looking down on me (*QPY* 117).

[contd] “I shun intimate social contacts because of the feeling that, just as soon as people get acquainted with me, they will discover my weaknesses and limitations, and then they will have nothing to do with me (*QPY* 117).

[contd] “I am afraid to think.

I was afraid to express myself when young because I would be charged with foolishness, and now my brain will hardly work.

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

I am very sensitive, exceedingly self-conscious.

I find I have a chronic habit of turning mole-hills into mountains.

12:6.9 “4. It is hard for me to receive a favor and feel that it is given in friendship, or that I in any way deserve it.

I always feel that it is extended as a manifestation of pity.

I think everybody is looking down on me.

12:6.10 “5. I shun intimate social contacts, because of the feeling that just as soon as people get acquainted with me they will look down on me—will discover my weaknesses and have nothing to do with me except out of pity.

This probably accounts for the fact that few of my friendships ever progress beyond the acquaintance stage. There is a barrier. I know it is largely my own fault, but I seem powerless to prevent it. I am in the grip of this conviction of inferiority.

12:6.11 “6. I have repressed all original and fearless personal thinking for so many years that my brain will hardly work now.

I was afraid to express myself when young because I would be charged with foolishness.

I dared not indulge my imagination. For years and years I thought I really did not have good common sense, and, of course, all this has served to prevent my trying to seek higher positions. I feared I could not fill them.

SOURCE

I have had to get along with poor positions because I was afraid to take a better position even when it was offered to me” (*QPY* 117).

[contd] Others who read this may, in varying degrees, see themselves; how they have been handicapped throughout a longer or shorter life by these fears of inferiority. It is a fact that if we constantly pick on our children when they are young, they will later on develop the habit of picking on themselves. And once that habit is formed—well, it’s good-bye to happiness and self-realization until the unfortunate owner of the complex gets rid of it (*QPY* 117).

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

I have had to get along with small wages because I was afraid to take a better position, even when it was offered to me.

I have alternated between the longing to climb higher and the feeling that I would make a failure if I attempted it. Thus I drifted on, year by year, feeling that I was a failure, that nobody wanted me; and to-day I am helpless unless there is a boss around all the time to tell me what to do.

12:6.12 “And now is there any help? What can I do? Which way shall I turn? Even after all this, can I make something of myself? Is there any deliverance from this terrible situation?”

12:6.13 You see, if we pick on our children too much when they are young, they will develop the habit, in later life, of picking on themselves;

and while it is a commendable trait to be willing to recognize one’s weaknesses and put forth proper efforts for their correction, *it is a soul-destroying habit to be continually nagging or picking on one’s self.*

SOURCE

[contd] IF YOU feel that you are drifting into the formation of an inferiority complex, break away, if it is humanly possible, from your surroundings, and strike out for yourself somewhere else. If it's your family that is a paralyzing influence, leave it. This sounds like harsh advice, but it is much better to take the step in the beginning, before your inferiority complex gets in its deadly work, than wait until your strength has been sapped (*QPY* 117).

[contd] An offshoot of this inferiority feeling is indecision.

Thousands upon thousands of good people suffer from it.

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

12:6.14 If such a situation develops in your home, it is better to get right away, to escape from such paralyzing influences and strike out in the world for yourself.

If you find you are drifting into the formation of an inferiority complex, sign your own emancipation proclamation, and declare yourself free from this sort of slavery; go out and hold your head high, stand up straight, and be firm in defense of your own right to live among your fellow men on this planet, remembering that our national Declaration of Independence recognizes the right of every human being to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

CHRONIC INDECISION

12:7.1 Another form of inferiority feeling is manifested in the fear to make decisions.

Thousands upon thousands of good people are suffering from chronic indecision.

They just can't make up their own minds when a problem confronts them, and the more trivial the affair, apparently, the greater their indecision.

12:7.2 Indecision, of course, is sometimes an accompaniment of brain fag or of nervous fatigue. The brain shares with the rest of the body in an all-around inability to do things when tired out. But I have in mind particularly a group of people who are fairly well, both nervously and otherwise, yet who are victims of chronic indecision. They are lacking in initiative and are afraid to decide things for themselves.

They work very well as a cog in a machine; but the moment they have to take a stand or make a decision for themselves they are scared to death (*QPY* 117).

They work very well as cogs in a machine, but the moment they find themselves alone, they are all but scared to death, afraid to make a positive decision.

I know a woman at the present time who for more than a dozen years has refused to take the responsibility for the most trivial decisions.

12:7.3 I am thinking of a certain woman, who for a dozen years has refused to be responsible for the most trivial decisions.

She has to consult a neighbor, or her minister, call on the doctor, or ring up her husband, before she can decide anything.

She has to consult a neighbor, see her minister, call on the doctor, ring up her husband, before she can decide on anything.

Her sister-in-law tells me it is pathetic to go shopping with her. She actually spent ten minutes in a market trying to decide whether to buy leaf lettuce or head lettuce, and then the sister-in-law had to make the decision. Purely a habit, it is, in the case of this woman. She is in good health, and is not suffering from a nervous breakdown;

As near as I can find out, her parents failed to teach her how to bear responsibility when she was young.

but her parents failed to teach her, when young, how to bear responsibility.

As near as I can find out, she never did anything by herself.

Her mother was always right by her.

Her mother was always beside her.

SOURCE

She tells me that she was never even permitted to wash the dishes entirely alone, or cook anything on her own responsibility.

Parents make a great mistake in not very early teaching children to bear responsibility, make decisions, take the initiative, and to go through with things alone (*QPY* 117).

[contd] NOW, there is only one way to cure indecision, and that is to make decisions.

If you have a tendency toward indecision, go and deliberately put yourself where you will have to decide things.

Don't talk and hedge—act. You'll make wrong decisions occasionally. But don't let a few mistakes faze you. Decide, and act (*QPY* 117).

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

She tells me that she was never even permitted to clear off the table or wash the dishes entirely alone.

Parents make a great mistake in not very early teaching children to bear responsibility, to make decisions, to take the initiative and go through with things alone.

12:7.4 I am going to prescribe for this woman the same régime that I recommended successfully several years ago for another case of the same sort. We arranged an itinerary that took the patient away from home alone for three months. The tour covered the whole western section of the United States from the Canadian to the Mexican border. Her itinerary, with a list of things she was to do, embraced over fifty typewritten pages, and she went through with it. At the end of ninety days, when she returned to Chicago, she was cured, as she said, "of all this infernal and life-long bondage that I have been subject to."

12:7.5 Thinking is of little value in these cases. You have to get into action.

The only way to cure indecision is to make decisions.

Deliberately place yourself where you will have to decide things, and shortly your cure is effected.

No use talking about it and thinking about it; act, if you are going to cure yourself of indecision.

**INFLUENCE OF PHYSICAL
HANDICAPS**

12:8.1 A few days ago I received a letter from a middle-aged man who has had more than his share of trouble. Tuberculosis of the spine has left him crippled and all but a hunchback, and he has had a number of other misfortunes which have led him to feel, until recently, that life was a failure. When I last saw him, he thought the best thing he could do would be to jump into the lake. As I have learned that it is a very rare thing for a sane person to commit suicide—that we have to be in an extraordinary position before we will part with either the pleasures or the miseries of living—I didn't take that threat seriously, but advised him how to go to work to solve his problems. He was still on the verge of despair, but he followed my advice, and one by one the great bugaboos before him disappeared. His economic situation cleared up, and he was overjoyed with the sudden improvement in his affairs—happy beyond expression—until he took a look at himself. Could he get married now? What about heredity? Would his children be affected? And so the clouds of despair began to gather again, and he made one more frantic appeal to me, saying: “Am I to be deprived of the joy of having a home? Can't I love and be loved? Can I never have children of my own to brighten my life, to train, to leave behind to share these things I am creating?”

SOURCE

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

[See 10:1.1.]

12:8.2 Not infrequently we meet men of this nature, who are conscientious about reproducing their kind, and who, because of certain shortcomings, afflictions, or deformities, hesitate to assume the responsibility of parenthood. I am glad I could tell this young man that practically all the afflictions which served to deter him from marriage were of a sort not transmissible by heredity.

[It is now generally accepted in scientific circles that acquired characteristics are not transmissible.

It is indeed encouraging to be able to tell parents, or would-be parents, that so-called acquired characteristics are not inherited; that, in general, those afflictions which come upon us as a result of accident and disease are not transmissible to the next generation.

It is only that which we were born with that we pass on to our progeny.

Some one has aptly stated this truth by saying that “wooden heads are inherited, but wooden legs are not” (William S. Sadler, M.D. and Lena K. Sadler, M.D., *The Mother and Her Child* [1920] 14).]

As some one has said, “Wooden heads are inherited, but wooden legs are not.”

12:8.3 On the other hand, when we are victims ourselves of hereditary defects, we should recognize that education, discipline, and training can do much to overcome them. If you will apply yourself resolutely to the mastery of an undesirable trait of this kind, you can wipe it out of your own list of handicaps. While you may not be able to take the tendency out of your germ plasm, so as to avoid passing it on to future generations, you can, practically speaking, take it out of your own life. It means work, hard work, but you can do it.

12:8.4 It may be of interest to explain more fully how this unfortunate **young man** solved his problems. There were four or five big things that seemed to threaten his happiness, and these we wrote down on a piece of paper. Some of them were highly personal; the most important he chose for immediate solution, and was successful. **The next difficulty happened to be one in which I could help; we soon smoked that little blue devil out of his hiding place and saw that he was duly executed.** And so, one by one, tackling the more important problems first, these difficulties were solved. When we are confronted with half a dozen troubles, we are overawed and feel that we can never master them; but if we tackle them one by one, they soon take flight.

THE MATTER OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

12:9.1 **I find a lot of folks are picking on themselves because of some trifling bodily handicap. I know of a young man whose life was almost ruined because the first time he ran away from home to go swimming (he unfortunately had a mother who was willing her son should learn to swim but didn't want him to go near the water) the boys laughed at him and made funny remarks about his physical development.** Their gibes struck terror to the soul of this bashful lad. Even in college he feigned illness, trying to get a physician's certificate to keep out of gymnasium work. There constantly hung over him the dread of being observed, criticized regarding his physical development,

and yet when I examined him I found him to be in every sense an average, normal man. His fears were groundless, but they pursued him until he was over thirty years of age, and in the meantime he developed a first-class inferiority complex. At last he confided his secret to a physician and his mind was set at rest, tho it required years to outgrow this depressing tendency.

[contd from 12:7.5] We are constantly meeting folks who are worried almost to death over some physical peculiarity—their noses are too big, or there is something wrong with their eyes, or their eyebrows; maybe their chins aren't just right, their Adam's apple works like an elevator,

or their hair begins to fall out (*QPY* 117).

[contd] We must remember that we are not to blame for the physiques we have, except as we fail to take care of them and make the best of what our ancestors wished on us.

The world is full of all kinds of people, and, generally speaking, we are no more defective or deficient than the average run of folks (*QPY* 117).

12:9.2 We constantly meet with those who are worried to death over something peculiar about their physiognomy—their noses are too big, or there is something wrong with their eyes or their eyebrows, or their chins aren't just right;

and how worried some people are over their hair, especially when it begins to fall out!

We must remember that we are not to blame for the physiques we have, except as we fail to take good care of them and to make the best of what our ancestors have wished on us.

The world is full of all kinds of people, and, generally speaking, we are no more defective or deficient than the average run of folks.

None of us are angels temperamentally, or Apollos physically. We mustn't expect, in general, to be above the average, and we must recognize that we probably measure up to that average.

12:9.3 How self-conscious some of us are in a social sense! Not long ago I met a splendid woman, a beautiful character, who had side-stepped social contacts and had suffered lifelong misery because of a tendency to blush excessively. I had to tell her frankly that she probably would never get over it; that some folks were unusually pale or unusually red, and still they had a right to live; and that this tendency to blush, due largely to self-consciousness, was a great deal more noticeable to herself than to others. I told her I thought it was far more becoming than excessive pallor would be, but I don't think I succeeded in convincing her on that point. But she has started out with the determination, blush or no blush, to go about her business, and is beginning to win her due share of satisfaction in living.

12:9.4 Instead of maintaining a state of constant and exaggerated self-consciousness about these little defects—and we all have them—we must learn to go right on about our business, ignore them, forget them, and if they insist on intruding into our consciousness, **ridicule** them. Don't forget the power of ridicule in dealing with these problems. Laugh, and laugh heartily.

FALSE PIETY

[contd] Then we have another group of people who are constantly picking on themselves spiritually, morally.

They think they are not so good as other folks.

Of course they probably would resent it if anyone else made the comment;

12:10.1 We have another group who are constantly picking on themselves spiritually or morally.

They think they are not as good as other people.

Of course, they probably would resent it if anyone else said it,

SOURCE

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

like the man who was giving his testimony at the prayer-meeting. He told what an awful man he was, the worst man in the community, etc., and when a neighbor got up and agreed with him, saying he was glad to hear him confess it, he became righteously indignant and assured all present that he was no worse than the rest of them. We don't like to have others tell us how bad we are,

but they seem to get a great deal of consolation out of condemning themselves.

but there are certain types of people who seem to get a great deal of consolation out of condemning themselves in their own minds.

I don't doubt this glorified pseudo-humility gives them a great deal of satisfaction. But it's bad business (*QPY* 117).

It is bad business.

12:10.2 Look yourself over and recognize that you belong to the same tribe of sinners that the rest of us do, and go out with the same right to seek salvation, and then rejoice in its benefits.

[contd] If you belong to this group, keep your eye on the great patterns and ideals, and quit picking on yourself.

Keep your eye on the great patterns and ideals, and quit picking on yourself.

To say the least, there is not a great deal of inspiration in looking at ourselves, from a spiritual standpoint. We are of the earth earthy, so let us quit looking so much at ourselves.

Develop a religion that is based on "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (*QPY* 117).

Let us develop a religious experience that is based on "looking unto Him Who is the author and finisher of our faith."

[contd] Another group of people who go through life, stepping softly and fearfully, are those who feel inferior through lack of education.

12:10.3 Then we are constantly meeting another group who go through life stepping softly and fearfully because of lack of education.

SOURCE

Just because they are not high-school or college graduates they are afraid to express an opinion.

The time has come when you should realize that by reading and studying you can possess yourself of all the facts that any high-school or college graduate has, and that by mingling with the world and gaining *practical experience* you get something which none of them have, unless they obtain it after their school days (*QPY* 117).

[contd] If your town has a public library, you have an education right there on its shelves as far as book knowledge is concerned; but, remember, real education, real culture, consists in the development of the character, as an outgrowth of mingling and associating with your fellow men (*QPY* 117).

[My wife once asked me for a good definition of education, and after thinking a moment I told her one that I have never been able to improve upon in my own mind. It was this: that man is well educated, who, each day he lives, gets one more man's viewpoint of life (William S. Sadler, M.D., *Personality and Health* [1923] 40).]

[contd] Not long ago I had a patient who told me he felt very small and insignificant among his friends because they were constantly talking about geology.

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

Just because they are not high school or college graduates they are afraid to express an opinion.

The time has come when you should realize that by reading and studying you can possess yourself of all the facts that any graduate has, and by mingling with the world and gaining *practical experience* you get something which none of them have, unless they get it after their school days.

This going around with head bowed just because you don't have a sheepskin is all nonsense.

12:10.4 If your town has a public library you have an education right there on its shelves, as far as book knowledge is concerned; but remember, real education, real culture, consists in the development of the character as an outgrowth of mingling and associating with your fellow men.

If you have lived well and successfully, if you know how to associate with your fellows, if you are living a life that is making this world a better place for your children and grand-children to live in, then you are educated; indeed, you are more—you are, to some extent, cultured.

Real education consists in the ability, each day, to learn how one more human being looks at life.

12:10.5 Not long ago I had a patient who complained that he felt small and insignificant among his friends, who were constantly talking geology.

SOURCE

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

I gave him a list of three or four books, and told him I would give him ninety days to get posted on the subject.

At the end of that time my friend was ready to talk to any college professor on geology.

He can pick up a stone any time, and tell you its origin, history, and destiny. Inferiority complex? He's forgotten he ever had one (*QPY*117-18).

There had moved into the neighborhood a geology fan, and my patient dreaded to meet him.

I gave the patient a list of geology books and told him to get busy.

He devoured the books, and now is ready to talk to a college professor on geology.

He can pick up a stone any time and tell you its origin, history, and destiny.

What a change it has made in this man! Now he is delving into biology. He said he never knew how much could be learned, with the right books, about one subject in three months.

12:10.6 It should take a mature mind only six or eight months really to master all the essential knowledge in the whole four-year high-school course. We don't send our children to school for the knowledge they get, so much as for the training, the discipline, social contact, play, and other things that help to develop their social and gregarious characters. We send them to school for contact with their teachers. The encyclopedia has more in it than the teacher ever knew, but the encyclopedia can never take the place of personal influence—the inspiration that comes from contact with a devoted teacher.

[contd] Quit bemoaning the knowledge you have lost by not going to school, because you can easily make up for that by study.

12:10.7 Don't bemoan the knowledge you have lost by not going to school, because you can easily make up for that by reading and study.

SOURCE

There is no excuse for having an inferiority complex regarding education and intellectual attainments.

If you are lacking in anything, get busy and acquire it (*QPY* 118).

[contd] That's the method by which we brought a backward, bashful, reticent woman out of her shell.

Her personality was absolutely stunted.

By getting her to read periodicals on current events, and digesting the newspapers daily, we have put her in a position where she can discuss intelligently the things that are going on in the world today.

12: THE MIND AT MISCHIEF

There is no excuse for having an inferiority complex regarding education and intellectual attainments.

If you are lacking in anything, get busy and acquire it.

TEMPERAMENTAL PECULIARITIES

12:11.1 I have in mind a woman, forty years of age. She is a good wife and mother, but bashful and reticent,

always lagging behind in a general conversation, always fearful to take the lead or to express an opinion, or in case she should express an opinion, if somebody differs with her, she shuts up like a clam, making no effort to show why she believes and will continue to believe what she does, never daring to accept the challenge of controversy.

Naturally, she has grown up with a more or less stunted personality;

she lacks development in individuality and all that pertains to a happy, joyful, free and expressive life. Now, when such victims of the inferiority complex take themselves in hand, seek counsel, get directive help, they can escape from this segregated life and come out into the open where they can lead a normal social existence.

12:11.2 We are trying to help this woman by having her read periodicals on current events, keep track of the daily papers, and thus get into a position to discuss intelligently the things that are going on in the world.

SOURCE

We taught her to initiate conversations,

and discreetly to direct topics along the lines she feels competent to discuss. She is emerging from her shell in a wonderful fashion (*QPY* 118).

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And the most valuable help we have given her has been to teach her to initiate conversations;

not to wait for some one else to start, but to think of something with which she is thoroughly familiar and then start the conversation on that subject

and discreetly direct it along lines she feels competent to discuss.

This, together with her general efforts to increase her self-confidence, is proving effective; but how much easier it would have been if she had sought help before she was forty! It is easy to correct such deficiencies in school days. In fact, these diffident tendencies should be corrected in children before they enter high school. Teachers and parents should pay more attention to this, as it means a hard struggle after one has reached middle life.

12:11.3 And so, no matter what your handicap may be, whether handed to you by your ancestors through heredity or acquired through disease or accident, accept the fact and go on about your business. Remember, for instance, that stuttering is neither a crime nor a sin; it is simply a curable handicap. Make up your mind to get well, and while doing so, live a normal and happy life.

THE SISSIFIED BOY

12:12.1 Fond parents, particularly mothers who are overanxious about their children and those who have lost their husbands and are raising their boys without a father's influence and help, sometimes tend to make their boys more or less sissified. When such boys go out to mingle with other boys, they are laughed at, and this contributes to the formation of a social inferiority complex.

[contd] One of the most pathetic cases of inferiority complexes that I've run across is that of a grown lad whose mother, a widow, kept him so tied to her apron strings that he's a regular "sissy."

One day when he did make his escape and went out to play ball, the boys all laughed and shouted, "Oh, look at him! Henry throws just like a girl."

He never tried to play ball again (*QPY* 118).

[contd] Poor Henry—he never had a childhood, from a boy's standpoint (*QPY* 118).

12:12.2 I have a patient now, a chap whose mother kept him so close to her that he had little experience in associating with boys.

One day when he did escape he went out to play ball, and the first time he threw the ball the boys all laughed and shouted, "Oh, look at Henry! He throws just like a girl!"

He never tried to play ball again.

He was sensitive and brokenhearted, and stayed close by mother's apron strings. He never learned to drive a horse. I doubt if he could drive an automobile to-day. He never indulged in athletics. He doesn't know how to play games.

He never had a boyhood.

He only had a girlhood, growing up with his mother, and he was even afraid to get married. His personality was but a sort of budding—like the yeast plant, coming off the mother; he never, as an individual, was really born until he was thirty-five years of age, when he decided to break away and live his own life.

SOURCE

Parents make a great mistake in oversheltering and over-protecting their children.

Give them a chance to think, to act, to decide; encourage it, indeed force it. Don't let your children grow up as mollycoddles (*QPY* 118).

Fortunately, his mother has begun to see the light and has consented that Henry leave her for a year or two. We are going to pack him off to a camp first, so as to get him acclimated to a vigorous outdoor life;

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12:12.3 Parents make a great mistake in oversheltering and overprotecting their children.

Give them a chance to think, to act, to decide; encourage it; indeed, force it;

if you have a boy who is growing up without learning to do things that other boys do, force him out, put him into the game. See that he takes his place in life. And if you have girls, do the same thing. Put them in the kitchen, teach them to cook; put them through an average training, and you will be doing much to prevent the development of an inferiority complex.

12:12.4 We are meeting these cases of oversheltered youth all the time. It is difficult to advise parents in such matters. If we urge them to throw their children out into the world, and something goes wrong morally, the parents are inclined to blame us and to feel that they have made a great mistake in not continuing to protect their offspring. Yet contact with the world is absolutely necessary for normal development.

12:12.5 I have advised the parents of another oversheltered boy who is under my care to send the lad out for a number of summers to a well regulated camp;

and I am going to ask those in charge of the camp to put him through all the he-man paces on the program.

SOURCE

then we'll send him to school, where, we hope, his schoolmates will finish the work of severing the apron strings (*QPY* 118).

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We are going to force this boy, in his school work, into the more vigorous and masculine athletic activities, and shame him away from the sissified habits and practises he is now indulging.

My next move is to get him away from his mother for at least a year or two.

I haven't had the heart to tell her this, face to face, but I have told the boy's father. This mother is simply ruining the future of her boy, and she doesn't know it. She is doing it all out of an overflowing, kind and motherly heart. In fact, I am not sure that it would be necessary to do much except take him away from his mother. She simply idolizes him and seems to have no common sense whatever when it comes to his management and upbringing.

12:12.6 No one—at least no one who has been a parent himself—feels like advocating a boy's running away from home; but if you had to see these things from the physician's angle, as I have to, you would say that in a case like this it would be a godsend if the boy had grit enough to pack up and leave home, join the navy, or do something like that; but this boy won't do it. We shall have to plan things for him and send him away. His mother has already so thoroughly sissified him that there will be no danger of his getting up courage enough in the next few years to leave home.

LEARN TO BE A GOOD LOSER

12:13.1 Every now and then I run across a person who is all but ruining his life through conscientious worry over some minor mistake he made when young. I could fill this chapter with stories of such people. They are worrying over some immature decision, or over this or that indiscretion or folly of their salad days. If you belong to that foolish group, resign from it at once. Lack of judgment is an inevitable part of youth, and remorse for an error of that kind is both useless and unfair to yourself.

[contd] One of the first things a person with a tendency to an inferiority complex should learn is to be a *good loser*.

You know we can't always be on top of the heap, and it is a wonderful help in overcoming this tendency to pick on yourself, to get accustomed to the idea that you are going to lose occasionally.

This is why I like to see young people play games, go into athletics, and join debating groups at school (*QPY* 118).

[contd] Moreover, we shall have less to pick on ourselves about if we treat most of the passing events in life as relatively trivial.

12:13.2 One of the first things a person with a tendency to an inferiority complex should learn is to be a *good loser*.

Nobody can always be on top of the heap, and it is a wonderful help—in overcoming the tendency to pick on yourself—to remember that it is no proof of inferiority to lose occasionally.

This is why I like to see young people play games, go into athletics, have debating groups at school;

they are learning to take defeat gracefully—to go up and congratulate their more successful opponents.

12:13.3 We shall have less cause to pick on ourselves if we treat some of these passing events as trivial,

if we expect them, if we get over the notion that we can win every contest;

SOURCE

Don't, when you have done your best, indulge in useless and unfair **criticism of yourself**. Condemnation of this sort is weakening both physically and mentally (*QPY* 118).

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and then, when we have done our best,

when we have played the game squarely, when we have run our course fairly, we can accept trifling defeats and transient disappointments as a part of life, without qualms of conscience on the one hand or **self-criticism** on the other.