

Take Your Medicine—Delay Won't Sweeten It.

Herbert Kaufman's Weekly Page

The Imitation Great Man Over-Emphasizes His Impersonation.

Over-Use Dulls the Spur

By HERBERT KAUFMAN.

Continuous criticism thwarts itself. Senseless censure simply fortifies stubbornness. Strike a spot often enough and it will gradually become indifferent to the blow. A blister is merely the forerunner of the callous. Oppression has never failed to incite revolt. Even a chicken-heart pumps lion-blood under sufficient provocation. Give an overdose and you will get a revulsion. Nagging obtains results, but unexpected ones. It produces irritation and indifference or hate. The constant drip of temper wears away the strongest restraint. Patience and charity easily win points which wanton pestering chronically loses. All of us have our flaws, but they can be dealt with far more effectually by reason than through force. Many a man can be coaxed who won't be driven. The whip, long since, proved itself a failure. Nothing of account was ever accomplished under the knout. Encouragement is the greatest driving force human nature knows. Hurting never yet helped anybody. Even surgery held a blood-stained score until anaesthesia eliminated its brutality. Cutting a fellow to the quick may have a constructive intent behind it, but humiliation and resentment often set up a gangrene in the harsh wound. You can't batter and bruise a man's sensibilities and make him like you, even if your remarks are incidental to assistance. The helping hand feels like a crushing fist when it pinches a sensitive spot. Every nag eventually seems like a nightmare. The most placid disposition will sour before daily frets and complaints. Life isn't worth the bother, under the spur. An occasional dig is a salutary experience for everybody. We all need to have attention directed to carelessness, delinquencies and mistaken courses, but by no stretch of imagination can we call a heel that kicks us raw a beneficent institution. The skeleton of an error is less impressive each time it is yanked out and rattled about our ears. Leave played hands in the discard. Repeated reminders of the same misstep will change it from a profitable example into a pestiferous nuisance. What occurred yesterday can't be replevined, resurrected or remade. One look is quite enough to waste on any ghost. You can't alter a man any more than you can rebuild a house if you hammer on one spot all the time.

Blind Men's Vision

SOME day we'll give deformed men and women a fairer chance to assert their competence in practical pursuits. Lots of 'em deserve their opportunities. We're losing the notion that such can't make good.

The governments of Europe have decided that they can't underwrite the future operating expenses of the million men who will have emerged from the war minus various vital belongings. They're educating them to piece out with near-human substitutes for absent portions. Experiments prove that nine out of ten can adapt themselves to the requirements of trades and crafts. With a little thoughtfulness we might have broadened life for them, these many years.

The past is bright with the achievements of the maimed. Milton saw the gates of Paradise. Helen Keller had so much will that she didn't miss her absent senses. Pulitzer and Pearson refused to accept eternal darkness as a hopeless estate—they went on seeing things. Imagination lent its sight to them. They became greater in misfortune. Big works can be planned behind closed lids. The undone must always be visualized before it can be reduced to tangible form. The truly blind are those who look without beholding and the most hopeless of all are those who live with all ambition asleep.

The Failure?

SUCCESS denied him and he nothing wrought
(Except within his heart what stars will know)
And in his love and duty failed of naught.

He could have sold his honor, but he chose
To garb his soul in clean resplendent robes
And wear his threadbare patches on his clothes.

He held his manhood stalwart to the end.
He hungered, but his conscience never starved.
He kept the faith with self-respect and friend.

"A Good Fellow"

HE lurched home last night "stewed to the gills," a maudlin, insensate hunk of pulp. She heard his clumsy noising in the dark and made pretense of sleep to spare herself from facing such a shame.

This morning he'll awake with tingling nerves and turn the Sabbath into a competent imitation of Hades for all the household.

They alone know him—this woman and her children. The "boys" downtown call him a "regular guy" and all the cafe waiters smirk at sight of the prodigal. He's a sport, a spender—and his family foots the bills.

Incidentally there are little bills at the butcher's and milkman's which won't be met this week—or the next—or the next. Also a needed suit of clothes that the boy won't get—a promised dress the girl shan't have, and the woman will manage with last year's hat and get her best shoes half-sole'd again.

If the "good fellows" weren't so popular, neither would Prohibition be.

Being a Real Citizen

BECAUSE you observe the law, pay your taxes, meet your debts, contribute occasionally to charity and vote the "regular ticket," you esteem yourself a good citizen and quite the peer of any neighbor.

But the trouble is, your neighbor isn't the peer to his own traditions. The neighborhood itself is indifferent. The state is too apathetic and the Nation, in many ways, is found wanting.

No man is a good American because he is orderly—that's taken for granted—he hasn't fulfilled his responsibilities until he has made it a mission and an obligation to help improve the standards he found waiting for him.

To strive for betterment, to advance progress and decency—these are basic duties of patriotism.

Nobody is truly a good citizen until he has benefited his time by his work.

The Devil's Due

COMPUNCTION is treason to Titan ambitions. When men survey paths across history, they have no regard for costs or corns.

Wrecked rivals are episodes in the carrying on of mighty ventures. Even Progress, if occasion justifies, rides the Car of Juggernaut.

Men seldom mark their hour without bruising it.

But for all that, never forget that something stronger than his wantonness is responsible for every victor's eminence.

Constructive instinct must dominate those who operate on great scales, even though they appear to achieve results by recourse to indefensible methods.

They may break laws and men, but they make them, too.

The mailed fist wastes its blows, if it has not between times held tremendous tools—otherwise power would be known only through the outcries of its victims.

Nobody can attain fame and command genuine prominence by simply knocking others down, despite undeniable evidence that certain sorts of leaders have invariably smoothed their paths by rough dealing.


In our time we have watched conscienceless enterprise win with despicable weapons.

But while captains of commerce do not scruple to expedite their ends, by short cuts across legislation and justice, all enduring success may be traced to manifest ability—to the economies of efficient control.

Many a monopoly exists because its possibilities were exploited so shrewdly that the consumer would have paid far more to disorganization than the huge amounts shrewd management demands as its due.

VERSES
by
Herbert Kaufman

Vim
Vigor
Victory



You hid what you did,
But you'll never get rid
Of the past. It will find you
And blab what's behind you.
Surrender ambition
And hope of position
Until you can clear your career
of suspicion.
You will not out-race it,
So turn 'round and face it—
The error is there, hasten
back and erase it.
You're simply delaying
The ultimate paying.
Clean the slate, wipe the score.
Put yourself right before
Exposure locates you and
screams at the door.