

A Jolly by Josh eBook

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MCMII

Dear Charlie,—Having a spare moment as I crossed the continent last time, I sat down in the rear end of a Lake Shore Limited train, and began to cast about me with a view to hitting upon some way of passing the time amicably with myself. As I looked about the car, I studied the faces and persons of my fellow-travellers, and found them uniformly uninteresting. My mind wandered from them out of the window, and I noted with a casual eye the advance civilization was making on both sides of the track. I began wandering vaguely from that back to the time when this was a trackless wilderness; and I pictured to myself the advent of the white man, and so on in an aimless sort of a way, from the beginning of our country until I reached the Declaration of Independence, the terms of which have always remained vividly impressed upon my mind. "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!" That is what we are after. So it is. How ridiculous! Why don't we think of it oftener? How many of us are free? How many of us are happy? And, particularly, how many of us would be any happier if we got the things we want? What foolish wants we have, anyway! Almost everybody wants something they don't want. Just then my eye caught sight of the official stenographer advertised as free. To an economical soul like mine the opportunity of having a free stenographer for a day and a half was too good to let slip by. So, placing my chair up alongside of his, I took from my pocket a letter which I had just received from my nephew, who had been spending his vacation in the West, and which I had not known exactly how to answer. The train of thoughts in which I had indulged, and the peculiarly vacant condition of my mind, made the time favorable for expansion upon the theme which had occurred to me; and so I inflicted on the poor boy a long letter, or sermon, or essay, or whatever you may please to call it, which I am enclosing to you.

I know that you are interested in topics of this sort, and so send it along with an apology for the amount of your valuable time which I am so wilfully wasting.

Your old friend,
Josh.

Dear Tom,—I have just received your letter, asking if you could bring a pony back from Colorado. I answer most assuredly, "Yes"; that is, if you want to! But do you want to? This question having occurred to my mind, and perhaps not to yours, you must excuse my becoming a little long-winded if I launch out on a train of ideas which has presented itself to my mind.

Let me briefly serve up the circumstances that surround you, and perhaps I can paint them so that you will look at them from a new point of view.



You are eighteen years of age. You have lived surrounded by wealth and a good deal of luxury; but the luxury in which you were lapped was the comfort with which a man of great working brain, who has well earned the right to spend freely, chose to take for his own rest and amusement, knowing well the value of every cent he has spent or given away.



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As the youngest of many sons, you have never had any responsibility; and yet your parents have left you with a taste for all kinds of expensive things, although, when you come to your money in a few years, you will have enough to gratify only a small part of the tastes which you have acquired. Nevertheless, the money to which you are heir, while necessitating a lower rate of expenditures than that of the household you have been brought up in, is sufficient to enable you to live under much easier circumstances than most of your neighbors.

In fact, if many of your friends started life with the income that will be yours, they would consider themselves decidedly rich, and would become, for a time at least, very much happier.

It seems to me that the Declaration of Independence has put it pat when it defines the principal object for which we strive as "*Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*"

This may seem wandering far from the question of a pony; but, if you have patience and follow me closely, you will find the old man is not too far from the point.

Now let us bear fully in mind that Life, Liberty, and Happiness are the objects which we have in view. In the tangled complications of modern existence one gets lost and bewildered, unless having very definitely in mind the objects for which we are striving. We would be like a ship drifting or sailing in a fog without a compass. We do not know whether we are attaining and accomplishing, or losing ground, unless we have definitely in mind an objective point or points with which to make comparisons of our position at different times.

I do not hesitate to write freely that we are engaged in the pursuit of happiness, even though shallow minds might take exceptions on the ground of selfishness. This is not so, as to a properly constituted mind happiness includes seeing others happy, and the greatest satisfaction comes from making them so. I will therefore let the Declaration of Independence stand for the present without amendment.

Let us begin by postulating a great degree of happiness for friend Harris, who has a dear little wife, a small house, and twenty-five hundred per year. He will have no vacations and several children; and though we see him full of happiness now, and envy his good luck and all, yet we foresee that in twenty years, even though his salary is doubled, he will have been enabled to lay by nothing, and will have a little heart-burning at the thought that he cannot give his three daughters the ball dresses and jewels they see among their boon companions.

Thompy, who has four thousand now, is not quite as happy as Harris, and complains a good deal of being poor. He is hard-working and progressive, and will doubtless double his salary; while Perry who is getting ten thousand, part as income from property and part as trustee of something or other, is the poorest man I know. He has desires, tastes,

and expensive habits which would make fifteen thousand a year look small to him, and can't get along without entertainments and personal expenses on a considerably higher plane than he can now afford.

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Where will you land? As you are heading now, you will never be an earner—it is more likely that you will be a spender—of money. You have been accustomed to lots of things you could not afford on ten thousand a year. Of course, you can cut down to that figure; but where will it land you when you are married and have three daughters to send into society? You will be worse off than Harris or Thompy in spite of the fact that you have twice as much as one and just as much as the other.

Here is a curious fact I noticed when in college. I was asked by the manager of the crew to collect subscriptions for him, and I undertook the job in the dormitory in which I lived. I often found that the richest men were the poorest. They never had money with them, and, while they promised large amounts, they seldom paid; while the men of moderate means seemed to be the ones who would readily promise reasonable amounts, and then draw a check for it the first time you asked them. I am stating these facts for the purpose of drawing some conclusions; and I think you will agree with me, particularly when I have proved them up by testing them from the other side.

The obvious conclusion sounds almost like a platitude,—that it is not the amount of money one has that increases one's happiness, but the use it is put to and the attitude of mind you have toward your income and the life you can lead with it.

Let us now apply this to your particular case, and draw some more conclusions.

A priori, you would be dissatisfied because you will be unable to do the things you have been accustomed to doing, and your attitude will be that of a man who has to deny himself things he thinks he wants. You will then cut down the rate of expenditure to within your income, as you have a certain modicum of sense in regard to matters of this kind,—not acquired, but inherited,—and permit yourself to spend freely up to your limits. Observe the result:—

When at the end of ten years you are married, you will find there is no increase in income, and you will have a lot of expensive tastes for things which you have come to look upon as necessary; and the increased expenses of a household will make you give up all sorts of personal comforts. This will make you feel poor, much poorer than Harris, for instance. As your children appear, they will in turn rob you of more of the things you have been accustomed to. You will have to keep a family horse and a pony, and give up trotters and boats.

I am not detailing these tragedies with the idea of painting a gloomy future, but merely to illustrate a point of view,—a habit of mind. I might say.



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It becomes evident, then, that, in order to bring your mind to the point of view that will make you happy, it would be well to study the case of Harris, the happiest man you know. Perhaps you could manage to do artificially, as it were, what nature or circumstances has done for him. He had no prospects, but good health, good heart, and good mind. He was perfectly delighted when he found he could earn twenty-five hundred dollars a year, a larger sum than he had ever had; and he saved some and spent some in new ways until he found, when he married, that his living expenses consumed it all. His wife, expecting little, was pleased with all she got; and, altogether, they seemed to get, in a large measure, the objects for which we strove and fought the war of 1776.

From the start you were differently placed. You became accustomed to gratifying your desires: you had little purpose in your actions; and, accordingly, you have now the habit of looking on each wish, whether of long standing or momentary, as something you might as well gratify.

My second conclusion I will jump to now, without filling in the intermediate steps leading up to it; namely, that, to attain happiness, it is necessary to cultivate the custom of restraining your impulse to gratify your every desire.

To illustrate this, I will carry out my threat of proving it up from the other side. You have often in your yachting experiences seen the yachts belonging to the Goulds, Vanderbilts, and other men of great wealth. These men feel it necessary to own ships almost as large and expensive to operate as ocean steamers. They build houses that cost several hundreds of thousands of dollars, and they give balls that would ruin men of moderate wealth, while their weddings are likely to cost in the neighborhood of a million dollars in decorations, gifts, and expenses. The deduction from this is that the ability of man to spend is only limited by the length of his purse, and a man's desire to spend has no such limits.

The conclusion to be drawn from this is that you have got to curb your desires unless you are unusual in one of two respects, either in your money-getting ability or in your lack of imagination for inventing new desires. In any case *you* can eliminate these possibilities. Now, admitting that at some point you have got to curb your desires, why not do it at a point near Harris's, which will leave you in a more comfortable frame of mind in regard to your money matters, rather than Perry's, who does not have all he wants, and is discontented, or Vanderbilt, who would consider himself ruined if he had to live on ten thousand a year?

I know that you may think that you cannot come to Harris's point of view, as your points of view have always been horizontally opposite, he looking up to a sum upon which you look down. But never mind. I am suggesting that we do reach that point, nevertheless, or, if not that point, that we shall use our intellects, and, with a view to expediency, select a point it would be wise to reach.

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I assert that we have now an intellectual problem before us. The question is what scale of expenditure we shall use and what proportion of our desires, *etc.*, shall we curb.

The usual hand-to-mouth method is to go ahead, do what we want until we are “up against it” and have to economize, and then for a while do without some of the more important things which we find we cannot afford, having already spent our money on things of lesser importance. This is the lazy man’s way, the one who does not care to do his thinking, and chooses to let circumstances make his course rather than wisdom.

The system seems to have some points of merit, and it is whispered that even Uncle Sam has sometimes let his affairs be managed on this plan, but that need not enter into this case; for you and I are both of us intelligent beings, observers after a fashion, and we intend to plan things out a bit and see what we can do with them, and perhaps see what stuff this luck that people talk about is made of.

Let us see where we now stand. We have found that it is the attitude toward your income, and the scale of living your income permits, that must be regulated; that your desires, if all were granted, will soon grow to a point far out of reach of your purse, no matter how rich you get; and, therefore, that the intellectual problem is before us of picking out a scale of living somewhere well within your present income and endeavoring to attain an attitude of mind toward living on that scale which will make you happy rather than discontented.

I know that you are thinking that I have forgotten the personal equation, that I am arguing as if all people were of the same temperament, forgetting that under given conditions one person would be happy and another would not, and that you, with your varied interests and contented disposition, would always find things to make you happy, even if you had to give up many of the luxuries which you now enjoy. This is true, but you must please note that I have not intimated that you couldn’t; and, in fact, the point of what I say rests on the assumption that you could. Moreover, in regard to other people, you will notice that this letter is not addressed to them; and, if any of them should happen to see it, they can put on the garment if it fits, or they can leave it alone,—it is all one to me.

But how can we bring this about? how tell what things you have been used to keep and what to give up? how keen a desire it is well to quell, and which ones? To reach this point, it is necessary to digress again in order to find the element of the magic touchstone which will tell us whether the thing we are looking at is made of gold or some baser metal.



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You must first have a look at our objective points, and try to analyze these a little bit. Life, Liberty, and Pursuit of Happiness. These are somewhat intermingled, as we consider liberty an essence of happiness. We also want health, and all that conduces thereto, particularly cleanliness and exercise. We want a fair amount of amusement and a good amount of work. We want the sense of being useful and the sense of being respected. This people will accord us if we are striving to accomplish some of the innumerable things which people want to have done. There is, of course, a higher field for man's energy,—that of striving for things which mankind ought to want for and doesn't; the position of the martyr or reformer, who works for the welfare of the people and receives ill-treatment for it, like Christ. But, while we all of us hope we would not be found wanting, were the demand made, we cannot help joining with Kipling in the wish "which I 'ope it won't 'appen to me."

Accordingly, while I am not blind to disagreeable but necessary possibilities, you will see that, if I digress to satisfy each one of them, I shall never reach the point, which no doubt in your mind by this time is the end; and so you must not pick flaws if I make statements which cover the probable, but not all the possible, contingencies.

We have found, then, that we want employment which will somehow add to the welfare of the human race; and is not this well worth doing? If you make something of that nature your object, and keep it fully before your mind, how much better off you will be than if you have continually in mind your own amusement, your own comfort! If you have your amusement as your life object, you will soon become a bored man, whom nothing will amuse. If you have comfort, you will be the discontented man who is never comfortable; for you soon fix in your mind the ideal combination of temperature, garment, palate, belly, and entertainment, and, seldom being able to get them all at once, you will seldom quite reach your ideal.

You might remark that I have made the statement that employment in something useful is the element of happiness; but I have not proved it by reasoning, nor have I led up to it by any line of argument. Let it rest at that. I shall let your intelligence and experience supply the proof that a definite object of employment with something in view of interest and benefit to the human race is, if not an essence of happiness, perhaps the easiest way to obtain the elements of happiness; namely, an object for yourself, a sense of usefulness, and the respect of your associates.

In addition to this, you must not be unpleasant to the senses. You must be morally and physically clean. You must have good manners, which is mostly being courteous and sympathetic and doing sundry social things according to the social code which happens to be then in vogue. You must learn, though it bores you as much as your Latin composition did, the proper way to dress at various functions and to answer people's invitations and generally do the correct thing.



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It won't take long to learn these things; and you need not remember them, as, if you once have in mind that there is a correct way of doing things, you can always find out the particular one at issue by asking.

It seems to me that I can best illustrate my point by comparing you to a tool, of which there are two ends,—the handle and the working or cutting end.

It is your business for your first thirty years of existence to make as good a tool of yourself as you can, and your business for the rest of your life to do as much work as possible; that is, let the tool be used after it is made. Thus, then, let us divide your experiences and acquirements into the handle and the edge of your tool. The handle, —your manners, education on general topics, such as history, literature, art, *etc.*, your habits of cleanliness, promptness, *etc.*, and your physical ability, health, *etc.*

Your edge is your special fitness for work; that is, your education, experiences, aptness, power of concentration, and accomplishment.

Now I am going to ask you to keep this division clearly in mind, as I think you will find in it many of the elements of the touchstone for which we are looking.

I know the thought will have occurred to you that you do not know what you will take up, and are in no position to tell what things will go to make up the right sort of an edge; yet you will observe that you are, of course, in the same position as other pieces of unshaped wood and steel, and for your first ten years nothing is done except to shape you up gradually, teaching you to speak and read, and generally getting house broken. During your teens you are going to college, learning how to meet with and talk to men, to be a gentleman and develop your muscles. Incidentally, you pick up a little knowledge of what the world has been doing.

Most of this you will forget; but, if you are wise, you will have drawn a few conclusions and made some observations, one of which is that it was mighty good of those old chaps who have been workers in the past to have cleared such good roads for us in every direction, so that a fellow could almost begin where they left off, when his handle is polished and he starts cutting.

An important thing at this period is to get the handle evenly balanced,—turned correct on centres, as they say; that is, not to get too far out of the normal in any particular, such as dress, promptness, profanity, or length of hair.

So much for the rounding of the handle; and now about the tool. At first, by watching, handling, and careful work, you must begin to show the quality and amount of metal you possess. Find out, as it were, by tentative trials whether it is capable of good edge or not. In other words, you want to find your bent and your abilities. To this end, if you are

naturally good at mathematics and have a scientific and inquiring turn of mind, as you have, it is well

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to give it vent. Do not fear, for instance, to spend your time and earnings on electrical apparatus or studies and experiments in physical science. If you have a fondness and desire for teaching or philosophy or accounting or trade, try to find out the essential requisites of the particular one which interests you, and follow up and acquire all the attainments which may be found useful. If you wish to enter politics or the lecture field, learn to speak and collect and classify your ideas when you are speaking and before people.

Let me summarize briefly the points that I have just covered.

You are now working for a definite object. You have money enough to do more than you want to do at present; but, if you learn habits expensive enough to spend the whole of it, you are going to be hard up when your expenses increase, as they will if you marry or assume greater responsibilities. Therefore, it is necessary for you to practise self-denial and deny yourself wisely. We have seen that self-denial of some sort is necessary to everybody who have not fixed their habits, and by that I mean fixed their habits to such an extent that no change in their circumstances will induce them to lead a more expensive life. It becomes obvious that those who have fixed their habits on economical and praiseworthy lines will not only be the wealthiest, but will be the people who enjoy the most freedom. It is to them that wealth is a real blessing; and it is they who make their wealth a blessing to others, always keeping in mind the personal equation.

It is therefore up to you to choose habits and fix them, so they will bring about the best result, and thus conduce to your happiness, the merit of your actions, and the use of your money. How, then, among all the opportunities which arise shall you choose, how tell which ones of the luxuries to which you have been accustomed you shall discard?

We have several times spoken of the touchstone we were seeking, one that will tell what actions are good and what bad, which desires to fulfil and which to deny. We have now reached something pretty close to our definition. Gratify those which contribute toward the success of the object you have in mind: deny yourself those which are detrimental to it, and which do not tend directly or indirectly toward its accomplishment.

We wish to attain the attitude of mind of a Stoic toward the first class of desires, and that of a spendthrift almost toward the second. For example, keep your personal comfort well in bounds, and train yourself to disregard it entirely; otherwise, you may say farewell to freedom.

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Be temperate in eating your food, drinking cold water, taking exposure, in your hours and in general. For example, it is not a good plan to have too much of anything which you like particularly. It immediately dulls the sense of pleasure in that thing, and, raising the level of your likes to a degree that makes you dislike some other thing, perhaps, which you liked before, thus working a loss rather than a gain. Therefore, temperance, which is synonymous of moderation, in my use of the word, is the wisest thing you can practise. But be intemperate in the pursuit of your object. Let no expense be too large to equip yourself physically or mentally for your life's work, as, for example, to assure regular exercise, to cure any physical imperfection or disease, or for the furtherance of any desire for investigation on natural or scientific subjects or points of interest allied to the thing which you are seeking to attain. There is no need of moderation in labor, exposure, or discomfort. Thus you will eventually reach your ends, and may obtain results at which people will stand amazed, believing them to be beyond the range of possibilities, as they will not know that for years a systematic preparation has been going on to prepare yourself for this result.

As a boy, your desires have been limited by your opportunities. You have had certain kinds of recreation provided for you which you have enjoyed. Your expenditure of money has been limited by your purse, which will have been small if your parents were wise; and your expenditure of time will have been limited by the hours you have been unable to take from study, which will also have been small.

At college your opportunities will have broadened, and you begin to have something similar to the elective system. You can choose more freely how to spend your time. Your development to this point, I have already said, may be called the rounding of the handle; and your education will be normal if you have average application, intelligence, and memory. During college your future course will begin to shape itself, but before you fix upon your definite object there is likely to be a period at which you can be tempted into the greatest dissipation. By dissipation I do not mean the accepted term, but the scientific use of the word; namely, the useless expenditure of energy in futile pursuits. It is the opposite of concentration, which means directing energy upon your object. To make myself clearer, I will define energy as also meaning, in addition to your labor, your money, as money is the accumulated energy of your ancestors, just as coal is the accumulated energy of sunshine.



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You must remember also that there is a certain amount of allowance to be made for some rather indefinite objects, which are none the less important, and which, for want of a better name, I shall call the Discard. Among these can be named the education of the imagination, having a good time generally, foolishness, mysticism, good fellowship, aesthetics, humanity, and humanities in general. The fact that many a man has thrown himself away by putting all his time into these things, and lived solely for good fellowship, for foolishness, or for imagination without attainment, is no reason why you should not partake in a small measure of these qualities, which is like the wheel grease on the axle or the clown in the circus. It is apt to be even more important yet, as it may prove to be the road to friendship, societies, society, and love. Moreover, you should not forget that, in the pursuit of your object, you must provide a material recreation for yourself,—literature, music, art, billiards, anything; something that will give you (and others, if possible) pleasure and diversion, and render your happiness independent of your work, if for any reason you are prevented from devoting your life to it.

We are now prepared to go over some of your pursuits with our touchstone, and see which ones we can recommend and which we cannot, which of the desires with which you are confronted or may be confronted are worth while or worth the expenditure of energy.

FOOD?

You should make no stipulation about your food, except that it be wholesome. The pleasantness of its taste in your mouth should have little weight with you. If you confine yourself to just that food which you like, and get so that your comfort depends on it, you will deliver over your freedom just as though you delivered yourself to be bound hand and foot in a dungeon. When the time comes that you must cut down your expenditure and live less “well,” you become unhappy, as you have taught yourself to look upon all food with the idea that it should give you pleasure rather than sustenance.

YACHTING?

By all means. It gives judgment, coolness, and readiness to face and overcome danger, muscle, ozone, handiness of hands, steadiness of eye, experience, and a sense of the depth and expanse of the ocean. By all means, yachting, but not for the purpose of show, as giving orders before other people, of taking dilatory trips in fair weather only, and lounging in an easy-chair on the deck of some yacht while others take the responsibility and do the work. While going to the expense of keeping a boat, you should so mould your life as to use it constantly. If you keep a boat on the off chance of wanting it every other week or just for the sense of having it ready, you will make it an annoyance to yourself rather than a pleasure. But here caution is recommended; and you should only keep a yacht if you can do so well within your means, and thoroughly

understanding that some day you may have to give it up, and that you must not think that a hardship.



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CLOTHES?

Yes, but within bounds. You can always afford to pay more for clothes than they are worth, and pay more attention to them also than they are worth; but here again temperance is recommended.

HORSES?

Yes; that is, enough to learn to ride, to master your horse, develop your muscle and *abandon* and poise, but not enough to watch jockeys carrying your colors or your coachman before you carrying your reins. Learn to ride, learn to drive; but that does not mean necessarily that you had better bring a pony back with you.

THEATRES?

Use theatres sparingly. They are perfect gluttons for time, and use up money. But of these the more important is time, and they make desperate inroads into the next day. So be temperate in theatres. Put part in for education and part for the discard.

BOOKS?

By all means. Spare no money on them. Be a spendthrift for books. We can always afford them; but pay for the printed matter, and not for the covers. If you choose books wisely and know what is in them and where to get at them when you want them, you can for a very small expense have a mine of information and recreation at your elbow, which could make you the best educated of men.

CLUBS?

Freely. It mostly goes to the discard; but you can afford that, provided you are careful not to have too great a waste of time. There are more opportunities lost inside of club walls than are gained.

CARDS?

There is no gain in gambling beyond the opportunity of watching the human character, and, incidentally to develop it; but it is time lost, and unworthily lost. The end does not justify the means. You had better play and read and sleep rather than gamble.



WINE?

Yes and no. Always in moderation. Do not acquire the habit of drinking. It is useless; and, after all that is said in favor of it by our mutual friend, Omar, and others, I can never see that a man is worse off for never having been drunk, and I am even Puritanical enough to think that he is better off, and, moreover, he has more self-respect, to say nothing of the respect of others. Nobody ever loses caste by refusing to drink. It is a difficult thing to do sometimes; but you know the old adage, that any man can lead a horse to water, but a hundred cannot make him drink. It is a pity that men should be inferior to horses in that respect. You will think that this is becoming a temperance lecture. Perhaps it is; but never mind, it does not call for total abstinence.

TOBACCO?

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I can see no advantage to be gained by tobacco; and you will find that it administers to your comfort, and that is the only advantage that it has. This in itself is a very damaging kind of an advantage, as, without advancing your object, it endangers your freedom, as all comforts do.

ATHLETIC PROWESS?

By all means cultivate this and in every form possible, but even here have an eye to moderation. Do not develop your heart and lungs to such an extent that, when you have taken up a more sedentary life later, they will suffer a reaction. Almost all the great athletes suffer a few years' discomfort while adjusting themselves to a less athletic existence than was theirs in college. Therefore, be moderate and specialize in this, so that in after life you may do what you are best fitted for, and in the attainment of athletic success make a test case of your proficiency of attainment. Do not fear to be prodigal of energy concentrated on the right thing.

FURNITURE?

In fixing up your room, your house, or personal surroundings, have good, comfortable furniture for rest and for work, but not for show. Be simple, even to the extent of being severe. The fewer things you have, the better off you are. Shun all other possessions as the devil would holy water. Have nothing that is not for a definite purpose and that you do not actually use. The criterion to be applied to these is not what you can find use for, but what you cannot get along without. A traveller who knows his business can travel on very slender baggage, and be perfectly comfortable and clean. Consider yourself a traveller through this world, and study to cut down your baggage. Thus you will avoid dissipation, and keep your freedom.

PICTURES?

Yes. Do not be afraid to cultivate the artistic. It is a card thrown to the discard, but one which you cannot regret. Do not have too many. A jumble of pictures is not what you want, but a few good ones. Only beware lest a craze for expensive pictures overtake you, which would interfere with your more definite object. If, however, your career lies in the line of the artistic, the purchase and collection of fine pictures come well within the golden things passed by our touchstone. Many men get a craze after the futile,—a hobby it is usually called; and they will dissipate great amounts of energy in collecting such things as postage-stamps, post-marks, or some other object of little use, and at great expense of time and money.



If you allow such things to distract your attention from your object, you may lose it entirely, just as you lose sight of something in the hands of a conjurer who has succeeded in directing your attention to something of momentary interest. In this connection it is well to say that the habit of spending must be avoided. Let a large expenditure be a circumstance. You can afford, however, to spend money on charities even to the point of dissipation. It is a cultivation of the heart. It might prove a career; and so, before your object is chosen, you approach it, as a possibility, afterward, as a card for the discard, in either case creditable.



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There are other classes of desires which appeal to the sensuous and sensual nature of man. Among these can be reckoned a taste for opium or morphine, a taste for women, or for those kinds of literature and drama which appeal to the sensuous nature. All these desires are like drunkenness, in that no one is the better off for gratifying them. Arguments of all sorts will be brought forward by men who have yielded to these desires; but, while convincing the one who is eager to be convinced, they are all of the negative sort,—they try to prove there is no reason why they should not. Our touchstone will not pass any such arguments: there must be positive reason why you should do a thing, otherwise do not do it.

This may seem Puritanical, but let's be Puritans to a certain extent. Play no games that are not distinctly winning games. There is a winning game to be played. Why, then, play a game which is neither a winning nor a losing game? It never gave me any pleasure to gamble with a machine or with cards, because I know these to be losing games. The plan of the game is always laid out so that the balance of chance is slightly against the player, sometimes considerably against the player, else why should the game be started?

We are left better off in no respect after all these desires are gratified. We are poorer in money, in pocket, in self-respect, and often in virtue.

We could go on so indefinitely through the list of all sorts of desires, but I have only touched upon a few of the more crucial ones to show how the touchstone should be applied; and even then results are crude, and would be of little help to you in fixing on a low scale of expenditure. They may, however, give you some ideas which will seem to guide you when you come to meet the problems for yourself.

And now we come back to the original question, whether you really want a pony. There are several really good ones in the stable that you can use. You are to be away a large part of the year, and you have never made half the use which you might have of your opportunities to ride.

I am, nevertheless, enclosing a check for the amount necessary to purchase your pony, because at your age I took a trip through the Rocky Mountains, which awakened in me a new desire for riding. It has proved my greatest ally in the severe strains to which the pursuit of my object has subjected me to, and because your ancestors have always kept their iron constitutions into extreme old age by almost daily rides, and because the sense of ownership of a horse may awaken in you the love and knowledge of the animal, and may accomplish a similar happy result.

Yours very truly,

uncle Josh.

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