



Mr. Ford's Page

MOST of the wisdom of the world was in the copy books. The lines we used to write over and over again, the homely old maxims on which we practiced to obtain legibility of our p's and q's, were the essence of human wisdom. They were the first-aid packages which the philosophers made to assist men who might need help out in the midst of the field of life. Most of the books that have been written since the copy books are only commentaries thereon; they say with more and harder words what we used to read in our first lessons.

It isn't learning, it is wisdom or plain sense that helps one through. Any man can learn all that he needs to know. No one ever learns more than he wants to know. We never learn anything unless we want to. Sometimes you will find a man with what appears to be a lot of useless learning and you discover that he accumulated it not because of his interest in its special departments, but because he thought that acquaintance with a multitude of subjects added to his prestige. He accumulated knowledge as he accumulated neckties or golf sticks.

The whole secret of a successful life is to find out what it is your destiny to do, and then do it.

Now, that idea has several sides. When we speak of what we "do" we usually mean what it is we "do" for a living. "What are you going to do when you are a man?" we sometimes ask the children; it means at what occupation are they to be engaged.

Well, we all have to work. But most of us have something else to "do" as well. If all that a man has to "do" in the world is the mechanical operations he performs during working hours, then it would follow that if machinery should be invented to perform that operation for him, he would have nothing to "do." One of the really useful figures of his time used to say that his work was of quite a different character than appeared to observers; the observers thought he was a cobbler; but he said he mended shoes only to pay the expenses of his proper work.

We toil because we have to square our debt with the earth—we have to pay for the wealth she lends us in every material thing we use. But what do we do with the life that we thus buy? That is the true form of the question as to what we "do."

But there is something besides our toil—there is also our work. Our toil is what we have to do to bear our part of the work of production in which mankind is engaged, and the fruits of which are essential to our well-being. That is our toil. But our Work is that which we would do all the time if we could. Happy is the man whose toil and work are one. There are many, however, not so happily situated.

Most of us are doing two things: that by which the body is kept alive, and that by which the higher part of our nature lives. We go to the job to pay expenses, and then we indulge ourselves in what we like to do, and maybe were meant to do.

That is the secret of all the "amateurs" in the United States. Amateurs are not always what we think they are. They are often more intelligent and skillful than the professionals. We shall have to change our ideas of the meaning of amateur; formerly it meant those who knew very little and were unskillful, those who had a liking for an art or a science, but merely dabbled. That idea will have to go in favor of the truer one, that the "amateur" differs from the professional only in this, that the professional gets his living by it and the amateur does not. In some respects the amateur is better off, for he has two fields—that by which he pays expenses, and that in which he finds expression.

It is amazing to find how many people in the United States have evolved financial systems. Here, there, everywhere are men who have occupied their spare hours with the great subject of money. Farmers, store-keepers, mechanics, country editors, could

collectively roll up a mass of research and speculative literature on this subject that would literally swamp the received authorities in the region of finance.

All this has a meaning. It means that the people are being prepared for something in the money realm. When you find receptive minds in all classes of society being moved by the same master note, you may be sure something is coming. All this mass of thought by plain people is the prophetic soil whence shall come the one whose mind can gather up all the fruitage of the others and bring the epochal change to pass.

In truth there are no discoverers. Nothing is ever entrusted to one man alone. We know now that no one man invented printing; the idea was seeking incarnation and found its way into life through several men at about the same time. Columbus was not the only discoverer of America; other men's thoughts had been set this way. Destiny takes precaution that no purpose shall fail through the unfaithfulness of one man, and so the new truth is entrusted to several. It is this which leads to so many bickerings in the matter of discoveries; it is hard to prove who was "first"; the idea was abroad "in the air," and it came through to the minds that were receptive, that were keyed to its quality.

Now, when you look at this from another side it is a mighty encouraging thing. Some day there may come to you the duty to do a disagreeable task, to take up a cause which will yield you no reward, which will at first envelop you in misunderstanding and abuse, which will make you look like a fool before men. You will shrink from it naturally, yet if you are the person selected for the task, some way it will make itself known to you as a serious proposition regardless of your likes and dislikes.

The appointed task may be less to your likes than you expected. A man's real work is not always what he would have chosen to do. A man's real work is what he is chosen to do. There is all the difference between choosing and being chosen. Sometimes our choices are our destruction.

But when you are sure of what you have to do—and unselfish sincerity, simple willingness to do what is right are the only compasses by which you can be sure—then you may also be sure of this: *you are not the only one.*

Others have been notified and called out too. But maybe not to initiate the

work. Maybe just to form the silent background, the receptive soil for the effects which your work will bring about. No man ever stands alone in any cause, if it is a righteous cause. When he calls, his voice will be heard and answered. He will be made aware by a thousand means that what he trembled before as a stern, forbidding task, is really the silent interest of many people.

There is a great deal of nonsense spoken about "the lonely heights." They are not lonely, though they may be silent. The loneliness comes when a man settles within himself whether he is to be a mere form following a conventional routine, or whether he is to listen and obey the voice of changeful life. It is lonely for him while he is deciding. If he decides to do what duty bids him, then he is no longer lonely; he comes at once into the fellowship of all liberated souls. The only liberated souls are those dedicated to perpetual obedience.

Most of us will never get fame. In a way this is to be regretted, for if we could get it we should know how well-off we are without it. Most of us will never shine as the captain-leader of great movements; but the real success and achievement of life is to be one of the foot soldiers of those great silent movements which, like the motion of the sea, keep humanity from stagnation.

IF A MAN is right, he can afford to go ahead full steam. To be right means mainly to be in tune with Destiny, and willing to obey. It does not necessarily mean to be agreeable, nor to be agreed with, nor to be popular, but it does mean to be useful in the purpose which Destiny is trying to achieve. If a man is right, he need not fear about standing alone. He is not alone. If he seems to be, it is only a test of his mettle and sincerity. Every idea that is right has many silent adherents. Raise your voice and you will hear them coming. Destiny is kind; it never asks a human being to do anything alone.