

Mr. Ford's Page

THERE are many good people in the world who are in great mental distress because they see very clearly the evils which exist, and because they are impatient to do away with them. This combination of clear seeing and impatient spirit is very destructive of interior peace, and many are running around with the impression that the rest of the world is wrong because it takes the matter less anxiously.

Every man who is doing something, knows that there are thousands of people who have each chosen another thing that they think he can do. And most of these thousands are people who are troubled with the disease just mentioned—clear seeing, complicated with an impatient spirit. Their home-made prescription by which they hope to cure themselves seems to be a very simple one, namely, to get some one else started on the line of action which their impatient spirits dictate.

There is a surprising number of people in the world who would be immensely relieved if you—"you are the one person in this world to do it"—would simply do the thing they want done, and which they are sure is the only proper thing to do.

It is a rather difficult matter to deal with, because most of the activities proposed are good, with a promise of being useful. But most of them will never be realized at all, because they will never be done by one person for all the rest, but rather by all the people for themselves. And another reason is: the people to whom the work is given have the habit of looking around for someone else to do it.

What we overlook is that only people can do things. It seems simple enough to say, and yet it is hardly simple enough to understand. Any number of individuals are buzzing around the world today under the delusion that people are the last element to be selected, on the theory that you can always get the people if you can get the money.

Indeed, that is the new process of beginning a "good work"—induce somebody to give money, and then, after the money is given, the person who receives it will undertake to find people to do the human side of the work; the consequence being that in a short time you discover that "the work" never had any human element at all, and that the money which it certainly had is gone.

One would say offhand: If you see a thing to be done, go and do it. If you cannot do it all, do what you can; you cannot take the fifth step until you have taken the first four. If you cannot do anything at all, consider whether the time has come to do anything. Times grow ripe, like everything else; yet many people think they can pick ripe events off green years; which cannot be done any more than ripe apples can be picked in months when they are green. Many reforms are picked green; many progressive plantings are done, not in mellow soil, but in the frozen ground. People don't observe the times and the seasons.

Now, take the evils in the world. They are many, and perhaps the weightiest burden we have to carry is the wonderment that they are allowed to exist. But there they are. Everybody doesn't see them; but you, let us say, can see them clearly. Everybody doesn't realize how these evils are eating into the life of the people; but you, let us say, see it so clearly that it is a pain to you.

Now, you can spoil your own life, sour your friends and bring your very vision into question by insisting that everyone sees exactly what you see. They will see it when the time is ripe, but not until then, and you are very foolish if you fret about it.

There are men working day and night on the problem of cancer; but as for you, you don't think much of cancer because it has not come within your life. And you would possibly resent it very

much if a cancer researcher should continually insist that you take up an interest in cancer. You would say, "I don't want to. I am not called to consider cancer. That is your field, not mine." Very well, you would be right.

Don't you see that with everyone working in his field, not insisting that the whole world come in also, much is being done? Every little while reports come from this field or that of achievements, and you had not even heard that men were working in those fields. Yet they are, each doing his work, and when the time is ripe, up goes the flag and the job is completed.

There are sentries along the frontiers of all our problems, men and women here and there who are sometimes lonely, who wonder why they must pace their beat alone; but we know that where sentries walk now, the whole army will march soon. Some people are sentries, to whom it is given to be on watch, this one on the frontiers of cancer, this one on the frontiers of financial diseases, this one on the new boundaries of statesmanship, this one on the limits of a new order of social life. Sentries all, but never so foolish as when they insist on calling the whole army out before the day dawns.

If it is given to a man to see that a certain condition exists, he is sentry at that point to give the alarm. Presently at the right time, the time set by the director of destiny, his work will bear fruit.

"Well, but," the impatient spirit cries, "what about the evil done in the meantime? We must do something to prevent that!"

Well, do it!

"But," says the impatient spirit, "I can't do it." Rightly said; you cannot, neither can anyone else. You cannot ripen an apple faster than it will ripen, and you cannot rot it faster than it will rot. These things appear to be under the law.

The people have the evils they deserve, no more, no less. By "deserve" one does not mean the judgment which any human being can pass as to desert; one means that all of us together have the sort of life that we have made, and we will continue to have it until we are fit to remake it in better quality.

When people begin to feel the evil; when there runs through society a new consciousness of the stupidity and the wrong of certain things; when false notes begin to irritate us; when the heat of indignant resentment begins to break out in thought and speech—these are the first streaks of the new day, or, to

change the figure, these are the first flushes of color which begin to show that the fruit is ripening for the autumn.

What is needed by people who see the evil is a still clearer sight; they need to see that the evil will collapse, utterly collapse. And what people of impatient spirit need to learn is that they must detach themselves from the system they despise and turn their efforts against it.

All of us want to slay the giant with one dramatic stroke of our sword. As a matter of fact, the giant usually dies from self-generated poisons.

Whatever the moral judgment of the morally sensitive people is against, that thing is inevitably doomed. Though it become the social rage and sweeps all the people within the circle of its viciousness, it is nevertheless doomed. Indeed, when you see evil at the height of its popularity and power, when you see all who speak against it ridiculed and despised, you may be very glad—for from that apex the fall is swift and sure. Never forget that. That is the ripeness of the times for the fall of the fruit. It falls, it rots, its pulp fertilizes more wholesome growths.

THERE is an impatience which is founded on fret and not on faith, although its cause is an anxiety for the progress of the Good. The destruction of evil and the progress of the Good wait on the law of ripeness and decay, as much as any fruit does. Some people try to pick ripe reforms in green years; but the times are not yet ripe. When it is given a person to see what is wrong, that person is a sentry on that frontier; he is stationed there until the main body of the army comes up. He must wait and watch. Impatience is an insidious sort of disloyalty that lures us from our posts which may have none to watch them if we desert.