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AS  
A MAN  
THINKETH

JAMES ALLEN



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# As a Man Thinketh

By James Allen

*Mind is the Master power that moulds and makes,  
And Man is Mind, and evermore he takes  
The tool of Thought, and, shaping what he will,  
Brings forth a thousand joys, a thousand ills: —  
He thinks in secret, and it comes to pass:  
Environment is but his looking-glass.*

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As a Man Thinketh

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[www.OneOfaKindPublishing.com](http://www.OneOfaKindPublishing.com)  
e-mail: [info@oneofakindpublishing.com](mailto:info@oneofakindpublishing.com)

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# AS A MAN THINKETH

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## *Foreword*

This little volume (the result of meditation and experience) is not intended as an exhaustive treatise on the much-written-upon subject of the power of thought. It is suggestive rather than explanatory, its object being to stimulate you to the discovery and perception of the truth that—

“They themselves are makers of themselves”

—by virtue of the thoughts which you choose and encourage; that mind is the master weaver, both of the inner garment of character and the outer garment of circumstance, and that, as you may have hitherto woven in ignorance and pain, you may now weave in enlightenment and happiness.

—JAMES ALLEN  
England

## CHAPTER 1

### Thought and Character

The aphorism, “As a man thinketh in his heart so is he,” not only embraces the whole of your being, but is so comprehensive as to reach out to every condition and circumstance of your life. You literally are *what you think*, your character being the complete sum of all your thoughts.

As the plant springs from, and could not be without, the seed, so every act of a man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and could not have appeared without them. This applies equally to those acts called “spontaneous” and “unpremeditated” as to those which are deliberately executed.

Act is the blossom of thought, and joy and suffering are its fruits; thus does a man garner in the sweet and bitter fruitage of his own husbandry.

Thought in the mind hath made us.  
What we are  
By thought we wrought and built.  
If your mind  
Hath evil thoughts, pain comes on you  
as comes  
The wheel the ox behind ...  
... If you endure  
In purity of thought joy follows you  
As your own shadow — sure.

You are a growth by law and not a creation by artifice, and cause and effect is as absolute and undeviating in the hidden realm of thought as in the world of visible and material things. A noble and God-like character is not a thing of favour or chance, but is the natural result of continued effort in right thinking, the effect of long-cherished association with God-like thoughts. An ignoble and bestial character, by the same process, is the result of the continued harbouring of grovelling thoughts.

You are made or unmade by yourself; in the armoury of thought you forge the weapons by which you destroy yourself. You also fashion the tools with which you build for yourself heavenly mansions of joy and strength and peace. By the right choice and true application of thought, you can ascend to the Divine Perfection; by the abuse and wrong application of thought, you may descend below the level of the beast. Between these two extremes are all the grades of character, and you are their maker and master.

Of all the beautiful truths pertaining to the soul which have been restored and brought to light in this age, none is more gladdening or fruitful of divine promise and confidence than this: that man is the master of thought, the moulder of character, and maker and shaper of condition, environment, and destiny.

As a being of Power, Intelligence, and Love, and the lord of his own thoughts, man holds the key to every situation, and contains within himself that transforming and regenerative agency by which he may make himself what he wills.

Man is always the master, even in his weakest and most abandoned state; but in his weakness and degradation he is the foolish master who misgoverns his "household." When he begins to reflect upon his condition, and to search diligently for the Law upon which his being is established, he then becomes the wise master, directing his energies with intelligence, and fashioning his thoughts to fruitful issues. Such is the *conscious* master, and man can only thus become by discovering *within himself* the laws of thought, which discovery is totally a matter of application, self-analysis, and experience.

Only by much searching and mining are gold and diamonds obtained, and you can find every truth connected with your being if you will dig deep into the mine of your soul. And that you are the maker of your character, the moulder of your life, and the builder of your destiny, you may unerringly prove, if you will watch, control, and alter your thoughts, tracing their effects upon yourself, upon others, and upon your life and circumstances; if you will link cause and effect by patient practice and investigation, utilizing your every experience, even to the most trivial, as a means of obtaining that knowledge of yourself. In this direction, as in no other, is the law absolute that, "He that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened"; for only by patience, practice, and ceaseless importunity can you enter the Door of the Temple of Knowledge.

## CHAPTER 2

### Effect of Thought on Circumstances

A man's mind may be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild; but whether cultivated or neglected, it must, and will, *bring forth*. If no useful seeds are *put* into it, then an abundance of useless weed seeds will *fall* therein, and will continue to produce their kind.

Just as a gardener cultivates his plot, keeping it free from weeds, and growing the flowers and fruits which he requires, so may you tend the garden of your mind, weeding out all the wrong, useless, and impure thoughts, and cultivating toward perfection the flowers and fruits of right, useful, and pure thoughts,

By pursuing this process, you will sooner or later discover that you are the master gardener of your soul, the director of your life. You will also reveal, within yourself, the laws of thought, and understand with ever-increasing accuracy how the thought forces and mind elements operate in the shaping of your character, circumstances, and destiny.

Thought and character are one, and as character can only manifest and discover itself through environment and circumstance, the outer conditions of a person's life will always be found to be harmoniously related to his inner state. This does not mean that your circumstances at any given time are an indication of your *entire* character, but that those circumstances are so intimately connected with some vital thought-element within yourself that, for the time being, they are indispensable to your development.

Every man is where he is by the law of his being. The thoughts which he has built into his character have brought him there, and in the arrangement of his life there is no element of chance, but all is the result of a law which cannot err. This is just as true of those who feel “out of harmony” with their surroundings as of those who are contented with them.

As the progressive and evolving being, man is where he is that he may learn that he may grow; and as he learns the spiritual lesson which any circumstance contains for him, it passes away and gives place to other circumstances.

Man is buffeted by circumstances so long as he believes himself to be the creature of outside conditions. But when he realizes that he may command the hidden soil and seeds of his being out of which circumstances grow, he then becomes the rightful master of himself.

That circumstances *grow* out of thought every man knows who has for any length of time practiced self-control and self-purification, for he will have noticed that the alteration in his circumstances has been in exact ratio with his altered mental condition. So true is this that when a man earnestly applies himself to remedy the defects in his character, and makes swift and marked progress, he passes rapidly through a succession of vicissitudes.

The soul attracts that which it secretly harbours, that which it loves, and also that which it fears. It reaches the height of its cherished aspirations. It falls to the level of its unchastened desires — and circumstances are the means by which the soul receives its own.

Every thought-seed sown or allowed to fall into the mind and to take root there produces its own, blossoming sooner or later into act, and bearing its own fruitage of opportunity and circumstance. Good thoughts bear good fruit; bad thoughts, bad fruit.

The outer world of circumstance shapes itself to the inner world of thought, and both pleasant and unpleasant external conditions are

factors which make for the ultimate good of the individual. As the reaper of your own harvest, you learn both by suffering and bliss.

A man does not come to the almshouse or the jail by the tyranny of fate or circumstance, but by the pathway of grovelling thoughts and base desires. Nor does a pure-minded man fall suddenly into crime by stress of any mere external force; the criminal thought had long been secretly fostered in the heart, and the hour of opportunity revealed its gathered power.

Circumstance does not make you; it reveals you to yourself. No such conditions can exist as descending into vice and its attendant sufferings apart from vicious inclinations, or ascending into virtue and its pure happiness without the continued cultivation of virtuous aspirations. And you, therefore, as the lord and master of thought, are the maker of yourself, the shaper and author of environment. Even at birth, the soul comes to its own, and through every step of its earthly pilgrimage it attracts those combinations of conditions which reveal itself, which are the reflections of its own purity and impurity, its strength and weakness.

You do not attract that which you *want*, but that which you *are*. Your whims, fancies, and ambitions are thwarted at every step, but your inmost thoughts and desires are fed with your own food, be it foul or clean. The “divinity that shapes our ends” is in ourselves; it is our very self. You are manacled only by yourself. Thought and action are the jailers of Fate — they imprison, being base. They are also the angels of Freedom — they liberate, being noble. Not what you wish and pray for do you get, but what you justly earn. Your wishes and prayers are only gratified and answered when they harmonize with your thoughts and actions.

In the light of this truth, what, then, is the meaning of “fighting against circumstances”? It means that a man is continually revolting against an *effect* without, while all the time he is nourishing and preserving its *cause* in his heart. That cause may take the form of a conscious vice or an unconscious weakness; but whatever it is, it stubbornly retards the efforts of its possessor, and thus calls aloud for remedy.

Men are anxious to improve their circumstances, but are unwilling to improve themselves. They therefore remain bound. The man who does not shrink from self-crucifixion can never fail to accomplish the object upon which his heart is set. This is as true of earthly as of heavenly things. Even the man whose sole object is to acquire wealth must be prepared to make great personal sacrifices before he can accomplish his object; and how much more so he who would realize a strong and well-poised life.

Here is a man who is wretchedly poor. He is extremely anxious that his surroundings and home comforts should be improved. Yet all the time he shirks his work, and considers he is justified in trying to deceive his employer on the ground of the insufficiency of his wages.

Such a man does not understand the simplest rudiments of those principles which are the basis of true prosperity. He is not only totally unfit to rise out of his wretchedness, but is actually attracting to himself a still deeper wretchedness by dwelling in, and acting out, indolent, deceptive, and unmanly thoughts.

Here is a rich man who is the victim of a painful and persistent disease as the result of gluttony. He is willing to give large sums of money to get rid of it, but he will not sacrifice his gluttonous desires. He wants to gratify his taste for rich and unnatural foods and have his health as well. Such a man is totally unfit to have health, because he has not yet learned the first principles of a healthy life.

Here is an employer of labour who adopts crooked measures to avoid paying the regulation wage, and, in the hope of making larger profits, reduces the wages of his workers. Such a man is altogether unfit for prosperity. And when he finds himself bankrupt, both as regards reputation and riches, he blames circumstances, not knowing that he is the sole author of his condition.

I have introduced these three cases merely as illustrative of the truth that man is the cause (though nearly always unconsciously) of his circumstances. That, while aiming at the good end, he is continually frustrating its accomplishment by encouraging thoughts and desires

which cannot possibly harmonize with that end. Such cases could be multiplied and varied almost indefinitely, but this is not necessary. You can, if you so resolve, trace the action of the laws of thought in your own mind and life, and until this is done, mere external facts cannot serve as a ground of reasoning.

Circumstances, however, are so complicated, thought is so deeply rooted, and the conditions of happiness vary so vastly with individuals, that a man's *entire* soul condition (although it may be known to himself) cannot be judged by another from the external aspect of his life alone.

A man may be honest in certain directions, yet suffer privations. A man may be dishonest in certain directions, yet acquire wealth. But the conclusion usually formed that the one man fails *because of his particular honesty*, and that the other prospers *because of his particular dishonesty*, is the result of a superficial judgment, which assumes that the dishonest man is almost totally corrupt, and honest man almost entirely virtuous. In the light of a deeper knowledge and wider experience, such judgment is found to be erroneous.

The dishonest man may have some admirable virtues which the other does not possess; and the honest man obnoxious vices which are absent in the other. The honest man reaps the good results of his honest thoughts and acts; he also brings upon himself the sufferings which his vices produce. The dishonest man likewise garners his own suffering and happiness.

It is pleasing to human vanity to believe that one suffers because of one's virtue. But not until a man has extirpated every sickly, bitter, and impure thought from his mind, and washed every sinful stain from his soul, can he be in a position to know and declare that his sufferings are the result of his good, and not of his bad qualities. And on the way to that supreme perfection, he will have found working in his mind and life the Great Law which is absolutely just, and which cannot give good for evil, evil for good. Possessed of such knowledge, he will then know, looking back upon his past ignorance and blindness, that his life is, and always was, justly ordered, and that all his past experiences, good and bad, were the equitable outworking of his evolving, yet un-evolved self.

Good thoughts and actions can never produce bad results. Bad thoughts and actions can never produce good results. This is but saying that nothing can come from corn but corn, nothing from nettles but nettles. Men understand this law in the natural world, and work with it. But few understand it in the mental and moral world (though its operation there is just as simple and undeviating); therefore, they do not cooperate with it.

Suffering is *always* the effect of wrong thought in some direction. It is an indication that you are out of harmony with yourself, with the Law of your being. The sole and supreme use of suffering is to purify, to burn out all that is useless and impure. Suffering ceases for him who is pure. There could be not object in burning gold after the dross had been removed, and a perfectly pure and enlightened being could not suffer.

The circumstances which you encounter with suffering are the result of your own mental inharmony. The circumstances which you encounter with blessedness, not material possessions, are the measure of right thought. Wretchedness, not lack of material possessions, is the measure of wrong thought. A man may be cursed and rich; he may be blessed and poor. Blessedness and riches are only joined together when the riches are rightly and wisely used. And the poor man only descends into wretchedness when he regards his lot as a burden unjustly imposed.

Indigence and indulgence are the two extremes of wretchedness. They are both equally unnatural and the result of mental disorder. You are not rightly conditioned until you are a happy, healthy, and prosperous being. And happiness, health, and prosperity are the result of a harmonious adjustment of the inner with the outer, of you with your surroundings.

You only begin to be you when you cease to whine and revile, and commence to search for the hidden justice which regulates your life. And as you adapt your mind to that regulating factor, you cease to accuse others as the cause of your condition, and build yourself up in strong and noble thoughts. You cease to kick against circumstances, but begin to *use* them as aids to your more rapid progress, and as a means of discovering the hidden powers and possibilities within yourself.

Law, not confusion, is the dominating principle in the universe. Justice, not injustice, is the soul and substance of life. And righteousness, not corruption, is the moulding and moving force in the spiritual government of the world.

This being so, you have but to right yourself to find that the universe is right; and during the process of putting yourself right, you will find that as you alter your thoughts toward things and other people, things and other people will alter toward you. The proof of this truth is in every person, and it therefore admits of easy investigation by systematic introspection and self-analysis. Let a man radically alter his thoughts, and he will be astonished at the rapid transformation it will effect in the material conditions of his life.

Men imagine that thought can be kept secret, but it cannot. It rapidly crystallizes into habit, and habit solidifies into habits of drunkenness and sensuality, which solidify into circumstances of destitution and disease. Impure thoughts of every kind crystallize into enervating and confusing habits, which solidify into distracting and adverse circumstances.

Thoughts of fear, doubt, and indecision crystallize into weak, unmanly, and irresolute habits, which solidify into circumstances of failure, indigence, and slavish dependence. Lazy thoughts crystallize into habits of uncleanness and dishonesty, which solidify into circumstances of foulness and beggary. Hateful and condemnatory thoughts crystallize into habits of accusation and violence, which solidify into circumstances of injury and persecution. Selfish thoughts of all kinds crystallize into habits of self-seeking, which solidify into circumstances more or less distressing.

On the other hand, beautiful thoughts of all crystallize into habits of grace and kindliness, which solidify into genial and sunny circumstances. Pure thoughts crystallize into habits of temperance and self-control, which solidify into circumstances of repose and peace. Thoughts of courage, self-reliance, and decision crystallize into manly habits, which solidify into circumstances of success, plenty, and freedom.

Energetic thoughts crystallize into habits of cleanliness and industry, which solidify into circumstances of pleasantness. Gentle and forgiving thoughts crystallize into habits of gentleness, which solidify into protective and preservative circumstances. Loving and unselfish thoughts crystallize into habits of self-forgetfulness for others, which solidify into circumstances of sure and abiding prosperity and true riches.

A particular train of thought persisted in, be it good or bad, cannot fail to produce its results on the character and circumstances. You cannot *directly* choose your circumstances, but you can choose your thoughts, and so indirectly, yet surely, shape your circumstances.

Nature helps every man to the gratification of the thoughts which he most encourages, and opportunities are presented which will most speedily bring to the surface both the good and evil thoughts. Let a man cease from his sinful thoughts, and all the world will soften toward him, and be ready to help him. Let him put away his weak and sickly thoughts, and lo! opportunities will spring up on every hand to aid his strong resolves. Let him encourage good thoughts, and no hard fate shall bind him down to wretchedness and shame.

The world is your kaleidoscope, and the varying combinations of colors which at every succeeding moment it presents to you are the exquisitely adjusted pictures of your ever-moving thoughts.

You will be what you will to be;  
Let failure find its false content  
In that poor word, "environment,"  
But spirit scorns it, and is free.

It masters time, it conquers space;  
It crows that boastful trickster, Chance,  
And bids the tyrant Circumstance  
Uncrown, and fill a servant's place.

The human Will, that force unseen,  
The offspring of a deathless Soul,  
Can hew a way to any goal,

*James Allen*

Though walls of granite intervene.

Be not impatient in delay,  
But wait as one who understands;  
When spirit rises and commands,  
The gods are ready to obey.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Effect of Thought on Health and the Body**

Your body is the servant of your mind. It obeys the operations of the mind, whether they be deliberately chosen or automatically expressed. At the bidding of unlawful thoughts, the body sinks rapidly into disease and decay; at the command of glad and beautiful thoughts, it becomes clothed with youthfulness and beauty.

Disease and health, like circumstances, are rooted in thought. Sickly thoughts will express themselves through a sickly body. Thoughts of fear have been known to kill a man as speedily as a bullet, and they are continually killing thousands of people just as surely, though less rapidly. The people who live in fear of disease are the people who get it. Anxiety quickly demoralizes the whole body, and lays it open to the entrance of disease; while impure thoughts, even if not physically indulged, will soon shatter the nervous system.

Strong, pure, and happy thoughts build up the body in vigour and grace. The body is a delicate and plastic instrument, which responds readily to the thoughts by which it is impressed, and habits of thought will produce their own effects, good or bad, upon it.

Men will continue to have impure and poisoned blood so long as they propagate unclean thoughts. Out of a clean heart comes a clean life and a clean body. Out of a defiled mind proceeds a defiled life and corrupt body. Thought is the fountain of action, life, and manifestation; make the fountain pure, and all will be pure.

Change of diet will not help a man who will not change his thoughts. When a man makes his thoughts pure, he no longer desires impure food.

If you would perfect your body, guard your mind. If you would renew your body, beautify your mind. Thoughts of malice, envy, disappointment, and despondency rob the body of its health and grace. A sour face does not come by chance; it is made by sour thoughts. Wrinkles that mar are drawn by folly, passion, pride.

I know a woman of ninety-six who has the bright, innocent face of a girl. I know a man well under middle age whose face is drawn into inharmonious contours. The one is the result of a sweet and sunny disposition; the other is the outcome of passion and discontent.

As you cannot have a sweet and wholesome abode unless you admit the air and sunshine freely into your rooms, so a strong body and a bright, happy, or serene countenance can only result from the free admittance into the mind of thoughts of joy and goodwill and serenity.

On the faces of the aged there are wrinkles made by sympathy, others by strong and pure thought, others are carved by passion. Who cannot distinguish them? With those who have lived righteously, age is calm, peaceful, and softly mellowed, like the setting sun. I have recently seen a philosopher on his deathbed. He was not old except in years. He died as sweetly and peacefully as he had lived.

There is no physician like cheerful thought for dissipating the ills of the body; there is no comforter to compare with goodwill for dispersing the shadows of grief and sorrow. To live continually in thoughts of ill-will, cynicism, suspicion, and envy, is to be confined in a self-made prison hole. But to think well of all, to be cheerful with all, to patiently learn to find the good in all — such unselfish thoughts are the very portals of heaven; and to dwell day to day in thoughts of peace toward every creature will bring abounding peace to their possessor.

## CHAPTER 4

### Thought and Purpose

Until thought is linked with purpose, there is no intelligent accomplishment. With the majority, the bark of thought is allowed to “drift” upon the ocean of life. Aimlessness is a vice, and such drifting must not continue for him who would steer clear of catastrophe and destruction.

They who have no central purpose in their life fall an easy prey to worries, fears, troubles, and self-pity, all of which are indications of weakness, which lead, just as surely as deliberately planned sins (though by a different route), to failure, unhappiness, and loss; for weakness cannot persist in a power-evolving universe.

You should conceive a legitimate purpose in your heart, and set out to accomplish it. You should make this purpose the centralizing point of your thoughts. It may take the form of a spiritual ideal, or it may be a worldly object, according to your nature at the time being. But whichever it is, you should steadily focus your thought forces upon the object which you have set before you. You should make this purpose your supreme duty, and should devote yourself to its attainment, not allowing your thoughts to wander away into ephemeral fancies, longings, and imaginings. This is the royal road to self-control and true concentration of thought. Even if you fail again and again to accomplish your purpose (as you necessarily must until weakness is overcome), the *strength of character gained* will be the measure of your *true* success, and this will form a new starting point for future power and triumph.

Those who are not prepared for the apprehension of a *great* purpose should fix their thoughts upon the faultless performance of their duty, no matter how insignificant their task may appear. Only in this way can the thoughts be gathered and focused, and resolution and energy be developed, which being done, there is nothing which may not be accomplished.

The weakest soul, knowing its own weakness, and believing this truth — *that strength can only be developed by effort and practice* — will at once begin to exert itself, and adding effort to effort, patience to patience, and strength to strength, will never cease to develop, and will at last grow divinely strong.

As the physically weak man can make himself strong by careful and patient training, so the man of weak thoughts can make them strong by exercising himself in right thinking.

To put away aimlessness and weakness, and to begin to think with purpose, is to enter the ranks of those strong ones who only recognize failure as one of the pathways to attainment; who make all conditions serve them, and who think strongly, attempt fearlessly, and accomplish masterfully.

Having conceived your purpose, you should mentally mark out a *straight* pathway to its achievement, looking neither to the right nor to the left. Doubts and fears should be rigorously excluded: they are disintegrating elements which break up the straight line of effort, rendering it crooked, ineffectual, useless. Thoughts of doubt and fear never accomplish anything, and never can. They always lead to failure. Purpose, energy, power to do, and all strong thoughts cease when doubt and fear creep in.

The will to do springs from the knowledge that we *can* do. Doubt and fear are the great enemies of knowledge, and he who encourages them, who does not slay them, thwarts himself at every step.

He who has conquered doubt and fear has conquered failure. His every thought is allied with power, and all difficulties are bravely met and

wisely overcome. His purposes are seasonably planted, and they bloom and bring forth fruit which does not fall prematurely to the ground.

Thought allied fearlessly to purpose becomes creative force. He who *knows* this is ready to become something higher and stronger than a mere bundle of wavering thoughts and fluctuating sensations. He who *does* this has become the conscious and intelligent wielder of his mental powers.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Thought Factor in Achievement

All that you achieve and all that you fail to achieve is the direct result of your own thoughts. In a justly ordered universe, where loss of equipoise would mean total destruction, individual responsibility must be absolute. Your weakness and strength, purity and impurity, are your own, and not another man's. They are brought about by yourself, and not by another; and they can only be altered by yourself, never by another. Your condition is also your own, and not another man's. Your suffering and your happiness are evolved from within. As you think, so you are; as you continue to think, so you remain.

A strong man cannot help a weaker unless the weaker is *willing* to be helped, and even then, the weak man must become strong of himself. He must, by his own efforts, develop the strength which he admires in another. None but he can alter his condition.

It has been usual for men to think and to say, "Many men are slaves because one is an oppressor; let us hate the oppressor." Now, however, there is among an increasing few a tendency to reverse this judgment, and to say, "One man is an oppressor because many are slaves; let us despise the slaves." The truth is that oppressor and slave are cooperators in ignorance, and, while seeming to afflict each other, are in reality afflicting themselves. A perfect Knowledge perceives the action of law in the weakness of the oppressed and the misapplied power of the oppressor. A perfect Love, seeing the suffering which both states entail, condemns neither. A perfect Compassion embraces both oppressor and oppressed.

He who has conquered weakness, and has put away all selfish thoughts, belongs neither to oppressor nor oppressed. He is free.

You can only rise, conquer, and achieve by lifting up your thoughts. You can only remain weak and abject and miserable by refusing to lift up your thoughts.

Before you can achieve anything, even in worldly things, you must lift your thoughts above slavish animal indulgence. You may not, in order to succeed, give up *all* animalism and selfishness, by any means; but a portion of it must, at least, be sacrificed. A man whose first thought is bestial indulgence could neither think clearly nor plan methodically. He could not find and develop his latent resources, and would fail in any undertaking. Not having commenced manfully to control his thoughts, he is not in a position to control affairs and to adopt serious responsibilities. He is not fit to act independently and stand alone, but he is limited only by the thoughts which he chooses.

There can be no progress, no achievement, without sacrifice. Your worldly success will be in the measure that you sacrifice your confused animal thoughts and fix your mind on the development of your plans and the strengthening of your resolution and self reliance. And the higher you lift your thoughts, the more manly, upright, and righteous you become, the greater will be your success, the more blessed and enduring will be your achievements.

The universe does not favour the greedy, the dishonest, the vicious, although on the mere surface it may sometimes appear to do so; it helps the honest, the magnanimous, the virtuous. All the great Teachers of the ages have declared this in varying forms, and to prove and know it, you have but to persist in making yourself more and more virtuous by lifting up your thoughts.

Intellectual achievements are the result of thought consecrated to the search for knowledge, or for the beautiful and true in life and nature. Such achievements may be sometimes connected with vanity and ambition, but they are not the outcome of those characteristics. They are

the natural outgrowth of long and arduous effort, and of pure and unselfish thoughts.

Spiritual achievements are the consummation of holy aspirations. He who lives constantly in the conception of noble and lofty thoughts, who dwells upon all that is pure and unselfish, will, as surely as the sun reaches its zenith and the moon its full, become wise and noble in character, and rise into a position of influence and blessedness.

Achievement, of whatever kind, is the crown of effort, the diadem of thought. By the aid of self-control, resolution, purity, righteousness, and well-directed thought you will ascend. By the aid of animalism, indolence, impurity, corruption, and confusion of thought, you will descend.

A man may rise to high success in the world, and even to lofty altitudes in the spiritual realm, and again descend into weakness and wretchedness by allowing arrogant, selfish, and corrupt thoughts to take possession of him.

Victories attained by right thought can only be maintained by watchfulness. Many give way when success is assured, and rapidly fall back into failure.

All achievements, whether in the business, intellectual, or spiritual world, are the result of definitely directed thought, are governed by the same law and are of the same method; the only difference lies in *the object of attainment*.

You who would accomplish little must sacrifice little. You who would achieve much must sacrifice much. You who would attain highly must sacrifice greatly.

## CHAPTER 6

### Visions and Ideals

The dreamers are the saviours of the world. As the visible world is sustained by the invisible, so men, through all their trials and sins and sordid vocations, are nourished by the beautiful visions of their solitary dreamers. Humanity cannot forget its dreamers. It cannot let their ideals fade and die. It lives in them. It knows them in the *realities* which it shall one day see and know.

Composer, sculptor, painter, poet, prophet, sage: these are the makers of the afterworld, the architects of heaven. The world is beautiful because they have lived; without them, labouring humanity would perish.

He who cherishes a beautiful vision, a lofty ideal in his heart, will one day realize it. Columbus cherished a vision of another world, and he discovered it. Copernicus fostered the vision of a multiplicity of worlds and a wider universe, and he revealed it. Buddha beheld the vision of a spiritual world of stainless beauty and perfect peace, and he entered into it.

Cherish your visions. Cherish your ideals. Cherish the music that stirs in your heart, the beauty that forms in your mind, the loveliness that drapes your purest thoughts, for out of them will grow all delightful conditions, all heavenly environment; of these, if you but remain true to them, your world will at last be built.

To desire is to obtain; to aspire is to achieve. Shall man's basest desires receive the fullest measure of gratification, and his purest aspirations

starve for lack of sustenance? Such is not the Law. Such a condition of things can never obtain. "Ask and receive."

Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so shall you become. Your Vision is the promise of what you shall one day be. Your Ideal is the prophecy of what you shall at last unveil.

The greatest achievement was at first and for a time a dream. The oak sleeps in the acorn; the bird waits in the egg; and in the highest vision of the soul a waking angel stirs. Dreams are the seedlings of realities.

Your circumstances may be uncongenial, but they shall not long remain so if you but perceive an Ideal and strive to reach it. You cannot travel *within* and stand still *without*. Here is a youth hard-pressed by poverty and labour, confined long hours in an unhealthy workshop, unschooled, and lacking all the arts of refinement. But he dreams of better things. He thinks of intelligence, of refinement, of grace, and of beauty. He conceives, mentally builds up, an ideal condition of life. The vision of the wider liberty and a larger scope takes possession of him; unrest urges him to action, and he utilizes all his spare time and means, small though they are, to the development of his latent powers and resources.

Very soon, so altered has his mind become that the workshop can no longer hold him. It has become so out of harmony with his mentality that it falls out of his life as a garment is cast aside, and with the growth of opportunities which fit the scope of his expanding powers, he passes out of it forever.

Years later, we see this youth as a full-grown man. We find him a master of certain forces of the mind which he wields with world-wide influence and almost unequalled power. In his hands he holds the cords of gigantic responsibilities. He speaks, and lo! lives are changed. Men and women hang upon his words and remould their characters, and, sun-like, he becomes the fixed and luminous center around which innumerable destinies revolve. He has realized the Vision of his youth. He has become one with his Ideal.

And you, too, will realize the Vision (not the idle wish) of your heart, be it base or beautiful, or a mixture of both, for you will always gravitate toward that which you secretly most love. Into your hands will be placed the exact results of your own thoughts; you will receive that which you earn, no more, no less. Whatever your present environment may be, you will fall, remain, or rise with your thoughts, your Vision, your Ideal. You will become as small as your controlling desire; as great as your dominant aspiration.

In the beautiful words of Stanton Kirkham Dave, “You may be keeping accounts, and presently you shall walk out of the door that for so long has seemed to you the barrier of your ideals, and shall find yourself before an audience — the pen still behind your ear, the ink stains on your fingers — and then and there shall pour out the torrent of your inspiration. You may be driving sheep, and you shall wander to the city — bucolic and open-mouthed, shall wander under the intrepid guidance of the spirit into the studio of the master, and after a time he shall say, ‘I have nothing more to teach you.’ And now you have become the master, who did so recently dream of great things while driving sheep. You shall lay down the saw and the plane to take upon yourself the regeneration of the world.”

The thoughtless, the ignorant, and the indolent, seeing only the apparent effects of things and not the things themselves, talk of luck, of fortune, and of chance. Seeing a man grow rich, they say, “How lucky he is!” Observing another become intellectual, they exclaim, “How highly favoured he is!” And noting the saintly character and wide influence of another, they remark, “How chance aids him at every turn!”

They do not see the trials and failures and struggles which these men have voluntarily encountered in order to gain their experience. They have no knowledge of the sacrifices they have made, of the undaunted efforts they have put forth, of the faith they have exercised, that they might overcome the apparently insurmountable, and realize the Vision of their heart. They do not know the darkness and the heartaches; they only see the light and joy, and call it “luck”; they do not see the long and arduous journey, but only behold the pleasant goal, and call it “good

fortune”; they do not understand the process, but only perceive the result, and call it “chance.”

In all human affairs there are *efforts* and there are *results*, and the strength of the effort is the measure of the result. Chance is not. “Gifts,” powers, material, intellectual, and spiritual possessions are the fruits of effort. They are thoughts completed, objects accomplished, visions realized.

The vision that you glorify in your mind, the Ideal that you enthrone in your heart — this you will build your life by, this you will become.

## CHAPTER 7

### Serenity

Calmness of mind is one of the beautiful jewels of wisdom. It is the result of long and patient effort in self-control. Its presence is an indication of ripened experience, and of a more than ordinary knowledge of the laws and operations of thought.

You become calm in the measure that you understand yourself as a thought-evolved being, for such knowledge necessitates the understanding of others as the result of thought. As you develop a right understanding, and see more and more clearly the internal relations of things by the action of cause and effect, you will cease to fuss and fume and worry and grieve, and remain poised, steadfast, serene.

The calm man, having learned how to govern himself, knows how to adapt himself to others; and they, in turn, reverence his spiritual strength, and feel that they can learn of him and rely upon him. The more tranquil a man becomes, the greater is his success, his influence, his power for good. Even the ordinary trader will find his business prosperity increase as he develops a greater self-control and equanimity, for people will always prefer to deal with a man whose demeanour is strongly equable.

The strong calm man is always loved and revered. He is like a shade-giving tree in a thirsty land, or a sheltering rock in a storm. Who does not love a tranquil heart, a sweet-tempered, balanced life? It does not matter whether it rains or shines, or what changes come to those possessing these blessings, for they are always sweet, serene, and calm. That exquisite poise of character which we call serenity is the last lesson culture; it is the flowering of life, the fruitage of the soul. It is precious as wisdom, more to be desired than gold — than even fine gold. How

insignificant mere money-seeking looks in comparison with a serene life — a life that dwells in the ocean of Truth, beneath the waves, beyond the reach of tempests, in the Eternal Calm!

How many people we know who sour their lives, who ruin all that is sweet and beautiful by explosive tempers, who destroy their poise of character, and make bad blood! It is a question whether the great majority of people do not ruin their lives and mar their happiness by lack of self-control. How few people we meet in life who are well-balanced, who have that exquisite poise which is characteristic of the finished character!

Yes, humanity surges with uncontrolled passion, is tumultuous with ungoverned grief, is blown about by anxiety and doubt. Only the wise man, only he whose thoughts are controlled and purified, makes the winds and the storms of the soul obey him.

Youthful reader, tempest-tossed soul, wherever you may be, under whatsoever conditions you may live, know this: in the ocean of life the isles of Blessedness are smiling, and the sunny shore of your ideal awaits your coming. Keep your hand firmly upon the helm of thought. In the bark of your soul reclines the commanding Master; He does but sleep: wake Him. Self-control is strength; Right Thought is mastery; Calmness is power.

Say unto your heart, "Peace, be still!"

**THE END**

# AS A MAN THINKETH

*"As you thinketh in your heart, so are you."*

—James Allen

In this inspirational classic, the wisdom of James Allen reveals that thoughts have the power to truly change a man's life, and that positive thinking will assist him in achieving a definite purpose, improved health, ideals, serenity, and true happiness.

*"Dream lofty dreams, and as you dream, so shall you become."*

—James Allen



James Allen was born in England in 1864. He left school at age 15 to work full time to support his family. After marrying and becoming an executive secretary for a large company, Allen retired at age 38 and moved with his wife to a small cottage to pursue a life of contemplation. James Allen died in 1912 after producing over 20 philosophical works.

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