

Peace, Power,

and

Plenty

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Orison Swett Marden



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Peace Power and Plenty
by Orison Swett Marden

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Table of Contents

Preface

Chapter 1

The Power of the Mind to Compel the Body..... 9

Chapter 2

Poverty a Mental Disability 17

Chapter 3

The Law of Opulence 29

Chapter 4

Character-Building and Health-Building During Sleep..... 38

Chapter 5

Health Through Right Thinking 47

Chapter 6

Mental Chemistry..... 57

Chapter 7

Imagination and Health..... 68

Chapter 8

How Suggestion Influences Health 74

Chapter 9

Why Grow Old?..... 83

Chapter 10

The Miracle of Self-Confidence 102

Chapter 11

Affirmation and Audible Suggestion..... 115

Chapter 12	
Destructive and Constructive Suggestion	128
Chapter 13	
Worry the Disease of the Age	136
Chapter 14	
Fear, The Curse of the Race	145
Chapter 15	
Self-Control vs. The Explosive Passions	162
Chapter 16	
Good Cheer God's Medicine	172
Chapter 17	
The Sun-Dial's Motto	181
Chapter 18	
"As Ye Sow"	188

Preface

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*Never before in the history of mankind has there been such an awakening to the great possibilities of the power of right thinking as we are now witnessing in all civilized countries.*

*Metaphysical schools are springing up under different names in all parts of the enlightened world. People are getting hold of little bits of one great divine truth, a new gospel of optimism and love, a philosophy of sweetness and light, which seems destined to furnish a universal principle upon which people of all nations, of varying philosophies and creeds, can unite for the betterment of the race.*

*The basic principle of this great metaphysical movement has opened up many possibilities of mind building, character building, body building, and success building which are destined to bring untold blessings to the world.*

*We are all conscious that there is something in us which is never sick, never sins, and never dies, a power back of the flesh but not of it, which connects us with Divinity, makes us one with the Infinite Life.*

*We are beginning to discover something of the nature of this tremendous force back of the flesh, this power which heals, regenerates, rejuvenates, harmonizes, and upbuilds, and which will ultimately bring us into that state of blessedness which we instinctively feel is the birthright of every human being.*

*To present in clear, simple language, shorn of all technicalities, the principles of the new philosophy which promises to lift life out of commonness and discord and make it worth while; to show how these principles may be grasped and applied in a practical way in every-day living to each person's own individual case is the object of this volume.*

*There is a growing belief that "God never made His work for man to mend." We are just beginning to discover that the same Principle which created us, repairs, restores, renews, heals us; that the remedies for all our ills are inside of us, in Divine Principle, which is the truth of our being. We are learning that there is an immortal principle of health in every individual,*

*which, if we could utilize, would heal all our wounds and furnish a balm for all the hurts of mankind.*

*The author attempts to show that the body is but the mind externalized, the habitual mental state outpictured; that the bodily condition follows the thought, and that we are sick or well, happy or miserable, young or old, lovable or unlovable, according to the degree in which we control our mental processes. He shows how man can renew his body by renewing his thought, or change his body, his character, by changing his thought.*

*The book teaches that man need not be the victim of his environment, but can be the master of it; that there is no fate outside of him which determines his life, his aims; that each person can shape his own environment, create his own condition; that the cure for poverty, ill-health, and unhappiness lies in bringing one's self through scientific thinking into conscious union with the great Source of Infinite life, the Source of opulence, of health, and harmony. This conscious union with the Creator, this getting in tune with the Infinite, is the secret of all peace, power, and prosperity.*

*It emphasizes man's oneness with Infinite Life, and the truth that when he comes into the full realization of his inseparable connection with the creative energy of the universe, he shall never know lack or want again.*

*This volume shows how man can stand porter at the door of his mind, admitting only his friend thoughts, only those suggestions that will produce joy, prosperity; and excluding all his enemy thoughts which would bring discord, suffering, or failure.*

*It teaches that "your ideal is a prophecy of what you shall at last unveil," that "thought is another name for fate," that we can think ourselves out of discord into harmony, out of disease into health, out of darkness into light, out of hatred into love, out of poverty and failure into prosperity and success.*

*Before a man can lift himself, he must lift his thought. When we shall have learned to master our thought habits, to keep our minds open to the great divine inflow of life force, we shall have learned the secret of human blessedness. Then a new era will dawn for the race.*

O. S. M.

*January, 1909.*

## Chapter 1

# The Power of the Mind to Compel the Body

---

**O**ur destiny changes with our thought; we shall become what we wish to become, do what we wish to do, when our habitual thought corresponds with our desire.

“The ‘divinity that shapes our ends’ is in ourselves; it is our very self.”

Long before Henry Irving’s death, his physician cautioned him against playing his famous part in “The Bells,” on account of the tremendous strain upon his heart. Ellen Terry, his leading woman for many years, says in her biography of him:

Every time he heard the sound of bells, the throbbing of his heart must have nearly killed him. He used always to turn quite white—there was no trick about it. It was imagination acting physically on the body.

*His death as Matthias – the death of a strong, robust man – was different from all his other stage deaths. He did really almost die – he imagined death with such horrible intensity. His eyes would disappear upward, his face grow gray, his limbs cold.*

No wonder, then, that the first time that the Wolverhampton doctor’s warning was disregarded, and Henry played “The Bells” at Bradford, his heart could, not stand the strain. Within twenty-four hours of his last death as “Matthias” he was dead.

As *Becket* on the following night—the night of his death—his physicians said that he was undoubtedly dying throughout the entire performance. So buoyed up and stimulated was he by

his great zeal for his work and the bracing influence of his audience that he actually held death at bay.

It is a common experience for actors who are ill to be cured for a time and to be entirely forgetful of their aches and pains under the stimulus of ambition and the brain-quickening influence of their audiences.

Edward H. Sothern says that he feels a great increase of brain activity when he is on the stage, and this is accompanied by a corresponding physical exhilaration. "The very air I breathe," says Mr. Sothern, "seems more stimulating. Fatigue leaves me at the stage door; and I have often given performances without any suffering when I should otherwise have been under a doctor's care." Noted orators, great preachers, and famous singers have had similar experiences.

That "imperious must" which compels the actor to do his level best, whether he feels like it or not, is a force which no ordinary pain or physical disability can silence or overcome. Somehow, even when we feel that it is impossible for us to make the necessary effort, when the crisis comes, when the emergency is upon us, when we feel the prodding of this imperative, imperious necessity, there is a latent power within us which comes to our rescue, which answers the call, and we do the impossible.

It is an unusual thing for singers or actors and actresses to be obliged to give up their parts even for a night, but when they are off duty, or on their vacations, they are much more likely to be ill or indisposed. There is a common saying among actors and singers that they cannot afford to be sick.

"We don't get sick," said an actor, "because we can't afford that luxury. It is a case of 'must' with us; and although there have been times when, had I been at home, or a private man, I could have taken to my bed with as good a right to be sick as any one ever had, I have not done so, and have worn off the

attack through sheer necessity. It is no fiction that will-power is the best of tonics, and theatrical people understand that they must keep a good stock of it always on hand."

I know of an actor who suffered such tortures with inflammatory rheumatism that even with the aid of a cane he could not walk two blocks, from his hotel to the theatre; yet when his cue was called, he not only walked upon the stage with the utmost ease and grace, but was also entirely oblivious of the pain which a few moments before had made him wretched. A stronger motive drove out the lesser, made him utterly unconscious of his trouble, and the pain for the time was gone. It was not merely covered up by some other thought, passion, or emotion, but it was temporarily annihilated; and as soon as the play was over, and his part finished, he was crippled again.

General Grant was suffering greatly from rheumatism at Appomattox, but when a flag of truce informed him that Lee was ready to surrender, his great joy not only made him forget his rheumatism but also drove it completely away—at least for some time.

The shock occasioned by the great San Francisco earthquake cured a paralytic who had been crippled for fifteen years. There were a great many other wonderful cures reported which were almost instantaneous. Men and women who had been practically invalids for a long time, and who were scarcely able to wait upon themselves, when the crisis came and they were confronted by this terrible situation, worked like Trojans, carrying their children and household goods long distances to places of safety.

We do not know what we can bear until we are put to the test. Many a delicate mother, who thought that she could not survive the death of her children, has lived to bury her husband and the last one of a large family, and in addition to all this has seen her home and last dollar swept away; yet she has had the

courage to bear it all and to go on as before. When the need comes, there is a power deep within us that answers the call.

Timid girls who have always shuddered at the mere thought of death have in some fatal accident entered into the shadow of the valley without a tremor or murmur. We can face any kind of *inevitable* danger with wonderful fortitude. Frail, delicate women will go on an operating-table with marvellous courage, even when they know that the operation is likely to be fatal. But the same women might go all to pieces over the terror of some impending danger, because of the very *uncertainty* of what might be in store for them. Uncertainty gives fear a chance to get in its deadly work on the imagination and make cowards of us.

A person who shrinks from the prick of a pin, and who, under ordinary circumstances, can not endure without an anesthetic the extraction of a tooth or the cutting of flesh, even in a trivial operation, can, when mangled in an accident, far from civilization, stand the amputation of a limb without as much fear and terror as he might suffer at home from the lancing of a felon.

I have seen a dozen strong men go to their deaths in a fire without showing the slightest sign of fear. There is something within every one of us that braces us up in a catastrophe and makes us equal to any emergency. This something is the God in us. These brave firemen did not shrink even when they saw every means of escape cut off. The last rope thrown to them had consumed away; the last ladder had crumbled to ashes, and they were still in a burning tower one hundred feet above a blazing roof. Yet they showed no sign of fear or cowardice when the tower sank into the seething caldron of flame.

When in Deadwood, in the Black Hills of South Dakota, I was told that in the early days there, before telephone, railroad, or telegraph communication had been established, the people were obliged to send a hundred miles for a physician. For this

reason the services of a doctor were beyond the reach of persons of moderate means. The result was that people learned to depend upon themselves to such an extent that it was only on extremely rare occasions, usually in a case of severe accident or some great emergency, that a physician was sent for. Some of the largest families of children in the place had been reared without a physician ever coming into the house. When I asked some of these people if they were ever sick they replied, "No, we are never sick, simply because we are obliged to keep well. We cannot afford to have a physician, and even if we could it would take so long to get him here that the sick one might be dead before he arrived."

One of the most unfortunate things that has come to us through what we call "higher civilization" is the killing of faith in our power of disease resistance. In our large cities people make great preparations for sickness. They expect it, anticipate it, and consequently have it. It is only a block or two to a physician; a drug-store is on every other corner, and the temptation to send for the physician or to get drugs at the slightest symptom of illness tends to make them more and more dependent on outside helps and less able to control their physical discords.

During the frontier days there were little villages and hamlets which physicians rarely entered, and here the people were strong and healthy and independent. They developed great powers of disease resistance.

There is no doubt that the doctor habit in many families has a great deal to do with the developing of unfortunate physical conditions in the child. Many mothers are always calling the doctor whenever there is the least sign of disturbance in the children. The result is that the child grows up with this disease picture, doctor picture, medicine picture, in its mind, and it influences its whole life.

The time will come when a child and any kind of medicine will be considered a very incongruous combination. Were children properly reared in the love thought, in the truth thought, in the harmony thought, were they trained to right thinking, a doctor or medicine would be rarely needed.

Within the last ten years tens of thousands of families have never tasted medicine or required the services of a physician. It is becoming more and more certain that the time will come when the belief in the necessity of employing some one to patch us up, to mend the Almighty's work, will be a thing of the past. The Creator never put man's health, happiness, and welfare at the mercy of the mere accident of happening to live near physicians.

He never left the grandest of His creations to the mercy of any chance, cruel fate, or destiny; never intended that the life, health, and well-being of one of His children should hang upon the contingency of being near a remedy for his ills; never placed him where his own life, health, and happiness would depend upon the chance of happening to be where a certain plant might grow, or a certain mineral exist which could cure him.

Is it not more rational to believe that He would put the remedies for man's ills within himself—in his own mind, where they are always available—than that He would store them in herbs and minerals in remote parts of the earth where practically but a small portion of the human race would ever discover them, countless millions dying in total ignorance of their existence?

There is a latent power, a force of indestructible life, an immortal principle of health, in every individual, which if developed would heal all our wounds and furnish a balm for the hurts of the world.

How rare a thing it is for people to be ill upon any great occasion in which they are to be active participants! How unusual for a woman, even though in very delicate health, to be

sick upon a particular day on which she has been invited to a royal reception or to visit the White House at Washington!

Chronic invalids have been practically cured by having great responsibilities thrust upon them. By the death of some relative or the loss of property, or through some emergency, they have been forced out of their seclusion into the public gaze; forced away from the very opportunity of thinking of themselves, dwelling upon their troubles, their symptoms, and lo! the symptoms have disappeared.

Thousands of women are living to-day in comparative health who would have been dead years ago had they not been forced by necessity out of their diseased thoughts and compelled to think of others, to work for them, to provide and plan for those dependent upon them.

Multitudes of men and women would be sick in bed if they could afford it; but the hungry mouths to feed, the children to clothe, these and all the other obligations of life so press upon them that they cannot stop working; they must keep going whether they feel like it or not.

What does the world not owe to that imperious "must" — that strenuous effort which we make when driven to desperation, when all outside help has been cut off and we are forced to call upon all that is within us to extricate ourselves from an unfortunate situation?

Many of the greatest things in the world have been accomplished under the stress of this impelling "must" — merciless in its lashings and proddings to accomplishment.

Necessity has been a priceless spur which has helped men to perform miracles against incredible odds. Every person who amounts to anything feels within himself a power which is ever pushing him on and urging him to perpetual improvement. Whether he feels like it or not, this inward monitor holds him to his task.

It is this little insistent “must” that dogs our steps; that drives and bestirs us; that makes us willing to suffer privations and endure hardships, inconveniences, and discomforts; to work slavishly, in fact, when inclination tempts us to take life easy.



## *Chapter 2*

### **Poverty a Mental Disability**

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**T**he worst thing about poverty is the poverty thought. It is the conviction that we are poor and must remain so that is fatal to the gaining of a competence.

Holding the poverty thought keeps us in poverty-stricken and poverty-producing conditions.

Poverty is an abnormal condition. It does not fit any human being's constitution. It contradicts the promise and the prophecy of the divine in man. The Creator never intended that man should be a pauper, a drudge, or a slave. There is not a single indication in man's wonderful mechanism that he was created for a life of poverty. There is something larger and grander for him in the divine plan than perpetual slavery to the bread-winning problem.

No man can do his best work—bring out the best thing in him—while he feels want tugging at his heels; while he is hampered, restricted, forever at the mercy of pinching circumstances.

The very poor, those struggling to keep the wolf at bay, cannot be independent. They cannot order their lives. Often they cannot afford to express their opinions, or to have individual views. They cannot always afford to live in decent locations or in healthful houses.

Praise it who will, poverty in its extreme form is narrowing, belittling, contracting, ambition-killing—an unmitigated curse. There is little hope in it, little prospect in it, little joy in it. It often

develops the worst in man and kills love between those who would otherwise live happily together.

It is difficult for the average human being to be a real man or real woman in extreme poverty. When worried, embarrassed, entangled with debts, forced to make a dime perform the proper work of a dollar, it is almost impossible to preserve that dignity and self-respect which enable a man to hold up his head and look the world squarely in the face. Some rare and beautiful souls have done this, and in dire poverty have given us examples of noble living that the world will never forget; but on the other hand, how many has its lash driven to the lowest depths!

Everywhere we see the marks of pinching, grinding, blighting poverty. The hideous evidences of want stare us in the face every day. We see it in prematurely old, depressed faces, and in children who have had no childhood and who have borne the mark of the poverty curse ever since their birth. We see it shadowing bright young faces, and often blighting the highest ambition, and dwarfing the most brilliant ability.

Poverty is more often a curse than a blessing, and those who praise its virtues would be the last to accept its hard conditions.

I wish I could fill every youth with an utter dread and horror of it; make him feel its shame, when preventable, its constraint, its bitterness, its strangling effect.

There is no disgrace in unpreventable poverty. We respect and honor people who are poor because of ill-health or misfortune which they cannot prevent. The disgrace is in not doing our level best to better our condition.

What we denounce is preventable poverty, that which is due to vicious living, to slovenly, slipshod, systemless work, to idling and dawdling, or to laziness; that poverty which is due to the lack of effort, to wrong thinking, or to any preventable cause.

Every man should be ashamed of poverty which he can prevent, not only because it is a reflection upon his ability, and will make others think less of him, but also because it will make him think less of himself.

The trouble with many of poverty's victims to-day is that they have no confidence that they can get away from poverty. They hear so much about the poor man's lack of opportunities; that the great money combinations will compel nearly everybody in the future to work for somebody else; they hear so much talk of the grasping and the greed of the rich, that they gradually lose confidence in their ability to cope with conditions and become disheartened.

I do not overlook the heartless, grinding, grasping practices of many of the rich, or the unfair and cruel conditions brought about by unscrupulous political and financial schemers; but I wish to show the poor man that, notwithstanding all these things, multitudes of poor people do rise above their iron environment, and that there is hope for him. The mere fact that so many continue to rise, year after year, out of just such conditions as you may think are fatal to your advancement, ought to convince you that you also can conquer your environment.

When a man loses confidence, every other success quality gradually leaves him, and life becomes a grind. He loses ambition and energy, is not so careful about his personal appearance, is not so painstaking, does not use the same system and order in his work, grows slack and slovenly and slipshod in every way, and becomes less and less capable of conquering poverty.

Because they cannot keep up appearances and live in the same style as their wealthy neighbors, poor people often become discouraged, and do not try to make the best of what they have. They do not "put their best foot forward" and endeavor with all