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Keys of the Kingdom of the Mind

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KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF THE MIND

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"Mens Regum Bona Possidet," said Seneca, a Roman Philosopher of nineteen hundred years ago. Translated into English, this is what he said: "A good mind possesses a kingdom." A similar sentiment was expressed by Francis Quarles, an English poet of three hundred years ago: "My mind's my kingdom."

Without irreverence, we may find a suggestive similarity between the keys of the kingdom of a good mind and the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus used the metaphor of the keys after Peter, in a luminous moment of inspiration and enthusiasm, had made a memorable utterance in which he revealed a profound knowledge of the nature of Christ. Then Jesus said that He would deliver to Peter the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. A little later, He used the same metaphor and gave the same power to all the Apostles. The dynamic element in the metaphor is knowledge, expressed in the old proverb, "Knowledge is power." On another occasion, Jesus upbraided the lawyers because they had "taken away the key of knowledge." What they had done was to substitute a false faith in the wrong kind of knowledge, with the result that the right kind of knowledge was ignored and forgotten.

Reduced to its simplest terms, the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven meant the proclamation of the Gospel, the heart of which was the knowledge which Peter had attained, and which he declared at Caesarea Philippi, which knowledge was later attained and proclaimed by the other Apostles also. It is still the key of

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effectual preaching by Christ's true followers, of whatever name or sign.

I have evoked this familiar passage of Scripture, not to expound it, but to draw an analogy. Let me therefore shift the metaphor to the keys of the Kingdom of the Mind, and I shall name certain indispensable attributes of intelligence,—characteristics essential to the gaining of knowledge which, when transmitted in the alembic of experience, becomes wisdom—the knowledge and wisdom which makes one's mind a kingdom. I cannot, of course, name all the keys of the Kingdom of the Mind, but I am going to outline for you five essential traits indispensable to anyone who would be intelligent.

Curiosity is the first, the curiosity which goads one to investigate, to find out, to know. "Why?" is life's most arresting question. An insatiable hunger and thirst after knowledge is the goad and spur and push of all science. Curiosity sends men to libraries and museums. Curiosity has led mankind to unearth buried cities and to explore the upper atmosphere. Old Samuel Johnson declared that "Curiosity is one of the most permanent and certain characteristics of a vigorous intellect." It is the first and the last passion of a great and generous mind.

Benjamin Franklin had the most full-orbed mind of the colonial period. He is esteemed by many European critics as the finest intellect that America has yet produced, and he was incredibly and ineradicably curious. *"What?"* and *"How?"* and *"Why?"* were constantly welling up from his insatiable curiosity. When he went to Europe, the ship on which he traveled was slow, had no newspapers and no radio, and yet Franklin never found the journey tedious or boresome; for all the way he was trying to learn something, now measuring the depth of the ocean, now taking the temperature of the water, now studying the stars or the sun or an eclipse, now

making observations concerning the weather, and the course of the ship, and winds, and flying fish, and rainbows, and everything else that came across his vision.

Attention is the second attribute of true intelligence. There is no use in investigating what curiosity discovers unless you pay attention to what you are investigating. After many years of experience in education and in dealing with human beings, I am fully persuaded that the difference between the superior and the mediocre student is more often a matter of attention than it is of quality of brain. Oh, to be sure, power of attention is quality of brain! But the principal difference between stupidity and alertness is in this single element of attention. Isaac Newton said he was not aware that he excelled anyone "except it might be in the matter of paying attention."

By attention, I mean close and shrewd observation; voluntary thinking; the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem to be several simultaneous possible objects or trains of thought. Too many persons pay no attention to what is going on about them. Their minds go wool-gathering. They will read a page, and when they have finished, they have no idea what they have read; for while their eyes scanned the page, their thoughts idled. While they are supposed to be listening to an address or a sermon, they are inattentively whispering to somebody else, or dreaming about something that happened yesterday, or scheming for tomorrow. They hear the voice of the man talking like a buzz-saw over their heads, and they suppose that he is saying what he ought to say, and they let it go at that. Such persons are self-doomed to mediocrity. I repeat that precisely focused attention upon the matter in hand is a principal ingredient in mental superiority.

Pope, in his *Essay on Man*, observes that "Strength of mind

is exercise, not rest," and Musonius warns us that "To relax the mind is to lose it." The person who wishes to possess the Kingdom of the Mind should require himself to practice the giving of precisely focused attention until attention becomes habitual. A good exercise is to require yourself, when you are out in the country, for instance, to note meticulously and consciously what you see: the varying tints of green across the landscape, the moving shadow of a cloud, the flash of a bird or the flutter of a butterfly, honeybees over flowers like sparks flying upward from a flame, cornstalks like marching armies waving their banners over the battlements of want, or shocks of corn like tattered wigwams across the field. And then require yourself to note what you can hear: the whispering of the breeze in the tops of the trees, the drowsy drone of bees, the far barking of a dog, the calling of a bird to its mate. Or as James Whitcomb Riley's Hoosier farmer would put it: see "unwrit poetry by the acre" and "hear nothin' but the silence." And then require yourself to give attention to what you can smell: the smell of bruised grass, the varying odors that come from the leaves of different trees, the smell of fresh-plowed ground, or of rain in the dust of the road. If we would be intelligent, we must pamper curiosity and cultivate the powers of observation, so that we shall go through life with the alertness of Earl Musselman, who had been born blind, but who at twenty-two years of age, by an almost miraculous operation, had been given his sight. Then he looked upon everything with the attention and the enthusiasm that an astronomer sees a new world swim into his ken.

I have mentioned Benjamin Franklin's insatiable curiosity. He had commensurate powers of attention. He gave attention until he became informed concerning everything: electricity and balloons; earthquakes, fogs, and gulf streams; flying fish, hop toads, elephants and houseflies; the history of the human race and the behavioristic responses of individuals.

It was said that Darwin never slept, which simply meant that he kept awake to what was going on around him. Maeterlinck observed bees and Sir John Lubbock observed ants until they knew all about them, their policy and economy, method, battles, conflicts, conquests, and all their wondrous systems of society. Ten or twelve years ago a little book was published under the title, *The Insect Man.* It was the story of Jean Henri Fabre, who had studied insects in general and wasps in particular until he became the world's greatest authority upon them. He based his work on direct observation. He accounted for his intellectual enthusiasm by relating that while he had always been interested in insects, yet one day he had read an uncommon essay by a great student, and that the effect was as if a spark had fallen into his mind and set it all alight. "What matters in learning," he said, "is not to be taught, but to wake up. A spark must explode the sleeping explosives." That would mean that education is more a matter of ignition than of erudition; more a matter of attention than of pedantic pretensions.

Reflection is the third key to the Kingdom of the Mind. *To think* follows along with curiosity and attention. First we have the desire to know, and then we give attention to the thing about which we want to know, and then we use the third key to unlock further doors of the Kingdom of the Mind; that is, we think upon what we have observed or read or heard; we ponder, we meditate, or as Shakespeare says in *Julius Caesar*: "My noble friend, chew upon this." Samuel McChord Crothers points out that "Our thought is the key which unlocks the doors of the world. There is something in us which corresponds to that which is around us, beneath us, and above us." Emerson notes that "Man carries the world in his head, the whole astronomy and chemistry suspended in a thought."

The mentally lazy person breaks down at this point. This

key is too hard for him to handle. James Bryce, one of the most learned Ambassadors Britain ever sent to the United States, declares that "to the vast majority of mankind nothing is more agreeable than to escape the need for mental exertion. . . . . To most people nothing is more troublesome than the effort of thinking." Henry Ford, in an interview at the height of his powers some twenty years ago, said: "Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is the probable reason why so few engage in it." Ford's distinguished friend, Thomas A. Edison, posted on signs about his laboratories this dictum: "There is no expedient to which a man will not go to avoid the real labor of thinking." Psychologists assure us that the average man has twelve billion brain cells, but uses only a small fraction of that number. No Kingdom of the Mind is possible without rigorous and disciplined thinking, patient and persistent thinking, independent and critical thinking, openminded and flexible thinking, straight and accurate thinking. The very word *man* suggests that the human being's distinguishing characteristic is *to think*. Wherever the word *man* appears in the various Aryan languages of the whole Indo-European group, it bears the double meaning both of human being and also of the ability *to think*. The root word is in the Latin *mens*, and in the English *mental* and *mind*.

Man is not man merely because he stands at the terminal end of evolution, with an elaborately developed body and an amazingly complex nervous system. It is in the capacities of his spirit that man differs from the rest of the animal creation,—his reflective consciousness; his power of abstract thought, to think about the use of tools, and about the essential qualities in human life, and about creative living; his amenableness to moral law; his power of choosing supreme ends, being drawn up from above by a sort of law of celestial gravitation, instead of being pushed forward only from behind. Goethe, the greatest German thinker of the nineteenth cen-

tury, sums it up in three words: *Gedenke, zu leben*: "Think, to live."

Memory is a fourth characteristic of true intelligence. We have seen that there is a difference between erudition and intelligence, but memory is essential to both of them. Alexander Smith opines that "a man's real possession is his memory. In nothing else is he rich, in nothing else is he poor."

What is the use of encouraging a desire to know, or of paying attention, or of thinking, if we cannot remember what we wanted to know, or what we found out, or the conclusions of our thinking. A good memory is not only a mark of superior intellect but is essential to it. Can you name any person in history who was essentially great who did not have a reliable memory? I recently read B. C. Forbes's *America's Fifty Foremost Business Leaders.* The distinguished author's scrutiny of these foremost leaders impels him to list certain qualities that are necessary for outstanding success, such as foresight, statesmanship, ability to select, to lead and to inspire other men, great mental and physical stamina, and so on. But prominently among these essential qualities, he names "abnormal memory" as a quality necessary for outstanding success in business leadership.

Hitler was a bad man and accomplished great evil; but everybody will admit that he was a man of amazing abilities and superior powers. Goering, who was as close to him as anybody ever was, believed that Hitler's success as a strategist was due largely to his "prodigious memory for detail." Let me quote Goering: "Hitler carried in his head the details of armaments, armor, speed and draft of practically every important warship in the world. Ask him for the figures on, say, a Brazilian cruiser, and he could provide them at a moment's notice."

Franklin D. Roosevelt was by no means as great a man as his idolatrous followers think he was; but, nevertheless, he was a

dynamic personality, and undoubtedly he was a great leader of men. Harry Hopkins, who certainly was in a position to know his hero, says that Roosevelt had a "phenomenal memory," and Hopkins thinks that his phenomenal memory was one of Roosevelt's most distinguishing traits.

John Wesley set into movement world-shaping currents of thought and experience. An historian at Oxford University said once in my presence that, measured in terms of his influence upon mankind, Wesley was the greatest Englishman of all the centuries. Wesley was at once a profound thinker and a practical organizer, and at the same time a shrewd observer of men. He once forthrightly declared that he doubted whether anyone was called to preach if he did not possess a good memory.

Let these illustrations suffice. Forbes says that "abnormal memory" is essential to leadership in the business world. Hitler had a "prodigious memory." Franklin D. Roosevelt had a "phenomenal memory." John Wesley said that no man was called to preach who did not have a "good memory."

Someone will say that unless a person is born with a good memory, he cannot have it, and that therefore he is not to be praised for the superiority which a good memory affords him, nor blamed for the mediocrity that results from a poor memory. This is specious arguing. A good memory is partly a gift and partly a growth. It is not so much a legacy as a triumph. It is not bought with a price: It is a natural product. It cannot be commanded by fiat: It is an effort. There is no reason why anyone should not have a dependable memory.

"What rules can one follow to acquire a reliable memory?" is an oft-asked question. In attempts to answer it, all kinds of artificial memory methods have been proposed. I remember one good

illustration. Some years ago a man had been imported from outside Boston to be the executive of a sporadic community committee. One day I entered the committee room and was introduced to this committee executive. In acknowledging the introduction, I remarked that I had met the gentleman, whom I shall here call Mr. Smith (although that was not his name). Whereupon, Mr. "Smith" said: "I know I have met President Marsh several times, but I have no memory at all for names or faces." And then he enthusiastically said: "I am now taking a course of study that is going to enable me to remember what I want to remember. It is memory by the law of association. The present circumstance will furnish a good example. I have met President Marsh several times, but I have never been able to recall his name, even though it is not an uncommon name. From now on, I am going to remember it, and this will be the method. Dr. Marsh is President of Boston University. His office is in the Back Bay of Boston. Long ago, the Back Bay was marsh land. The University of which he is now President is the most important institution in the Back Bay. That means that the Back Bay is still Marsh land! There I have my association! The President of Boston University, whose office is in the center of the Back Bay, and whose name is Marsh, and the Back Bay was once marsh land—there you have it: The law of association will henceforth take care of my memory on that subject."

The next day I was going along one of the streets of Boston, and I met this gentleman. I said, "Hello, "Smith." He stopped and looked at me with a question mark all over his face, murmuring: "Hello——, Hello——." "Don't forget your law of association," I said. Whereupon he replied: "Yes, I know that I was going to remember your name by some association; but I can't remember the association!"

Not by such stilted, involved, and artificial means is memory developed; but in a perfectly natural way. Let me mention six

points of fellowship with a good memory,—points which you may not find in books on the subject.

First: Be logical in your thinking. Thomas Fuller in his *History of the Worthies of England*, uttered a profound truth when he said: "Method is the mother of memory." Be orderly in your mental processes, habitually orderly. Nothing can take the place of orderly arrangement of observations and thoughts, or of systematic procedure in studying, writing, and public speech.

Second: Pay attention! It was the dictum of old Samuel Johnson that "the true art of memory is the art of attention." When one says that he has no memory for direction, or for time, or for names, or for anything else, he is in all probability confessing that he does not pay attention to where he is going, or to the time element in his schedule, or to the name that is given him, or to the matter before him.

Third: Use your memory. If memory is a key of the Kingdom of the Mind, then how pertinent are the words of wise old Benjamin Franklin: "The used key is always bright." The blacksmith's arm is strong because he uses it. The violinist has whipcords in his wrists because he uses them. The scholar develops a rich vocabulary because he uses it. Not contrariwise, a man may develop a strong memory by use.

Fourth: Trust your memory, and you will find it trustworthy. The power of suggestion is recognized by every student of human nature as a psychological fact. What a great mistake, then, for a person to suggest to himself that he cannot trust his memory. The better way is to place a burden upon your memory, and then let it carry it without crutches.

Fifth: Require your memory to be exact. The person who is content to remember approximately will have an approximate mem-

ory. Require yourself to remember things in sharp outline, and not with fuzzy edges. I was driving across a bridge recently with a man who ought to have known the answer to my question when I said: "What did this bridge cost?" This was his reply: "Two hundred thousand dollars—I think; or was it two million?" Well, there is considerable difference between two hundred thousand and two million! So far as his knowledge was concerned, he might as well have had no memory on the subject as to have had one so inexact.

Sixth: Be truthful. Nobody stands in greater need of a good memory than a liar,—to save him from becoming entangled in his own falsehoods; but it is impossible for a liar to have a good memory. That verdict is written in the very nature of things. When a man trifles with the truth, calling black white, and white black, the time comes when he does not know what the truth is. Most liars lie so as to create a sensation. If a man wants to impress or startle others by saying now that peach blossoms are white, and then that they are blue, and another time that they are green, and still later that they are yellow, he will soon reach the place where he does not know what color peach blossoms are. Stick to fact, and fact will stick to you. Tell the truth, and your memory will have no trouble in recalling the truth. The liar has thrown away a very important key to the Kingdom of the Mind.

Practical application of the results of one's curiosity, observation, reflection, and memory is the fifth key to the Kingdom of the Mind. What is the use of investigating, of paying attention, of thinking, of remembering, if one does nothing about it? I have mentioned Benjamin Franklin. He was the most practical of men. He was always applying his knowledge. His eyes were not strong, and therefore he had to carry two pairs of glasses, one pair for work close at hand, and the other for distant seeing. As a result of his

observation and reflection upon this fact, he invented bifocal glasses. He noticed that most of the heat went up the big chimney flues of the old colonial houses, so he invented what is called the Franklin stove, which brought the heat out into the room. He improved globes for street lighting, he invented the one-arm lunchroom chair, he established a public library, he organized a fire company, he founded an academy that became the University of Pennsylvania, he introduced into the Assembly of his Colony a Bill which provided for the paving of the streets of Philadelphia,—and so on it went; he was always giving practical applications to things that his curiosity prompted him to observe, and upon which he reflected. Lord Brougham, an English statesman, complimented Franklin by saying that "he could make an experiment with less apparatus and conduct his experimental inquiry to a discovery with more ordinary materials than any other philosopher that ever was. With an old key, a silk thread, some sealing wax and a sheet of paper, he discovered the identity of lightning and electricity,"—and then invented the lightning rod!

The practical application of the knowledge one possesses is what gives that knowledge meaning. I have heard students say that they knew their lesson in history or mathematics; in philosophy or chemistry; in theology or biology or law; but that they did not know how to tell it or express it. That is sheer nonsense. If one knows a subject, he can state it, and he should be able to make some application of his knowledge in its counterpart realm.

In fact, there is no real mastery of a subject until it is given its pertinent application. One of the most sovereign dictums of modern education is that we learn to do by doing. I might be curious about swimming, and my curiosity might cause me to give attention to the way fish swim, and the way dogs swim, and the way human beings swim. I might cogitate upon specific gravity, and upon how

a human body which is heavier than water can be kept on top of the water. I might remember all I have observed and thought and read on the subject, yet I shall never be able to swim until I get into the water and swim. So also, all knowledge, to be fully mastered, needs to be appropriately applied. Teachers of art tell their students that they know and excel by doing, by sketching, by drawing and by painting. Teachers of science demand that all theoretical knowledge shall go hand in hand with experimentation. It is only by applying his knowledge, by repeated appeals to nature, that the student learns the truth and becomes a real scientist.

I have given you five keys of the Kingdom of the Mind. The person who uses them—who becomes intellectually awakened so that he has a genuine thirst for knowledge, who observes shrewdly and reads attentively, who thinks and remembers and applies—such a person's mind is, indeed, a kingdom. He is conscious of his dominion over the earth and the forces of nature. All things have been put under his feet. He is at home in the world as a potter is at home with his wheel and clay, as an artist is at home with his canvas and colors. He has an appreciative understanding of the past of the race from which the stream of history gathers momentum and direction. He marches in Caesar's far-flung legions. He walks with Plato in his academic grove. He roams the hills of Palestine with Jesus and the Prophets, and sings to the lilt of David's harp. The glory that was Greece and the power that was Rome are his. With Emerson, he shouts:

> "I am the owner of the sphere;
> Of the seven stars and the solar year:
> Of Caesar's hand and Plato's brain;
> Of Lord Christ's heart and Shakespeare's strain."

But we cannot stop here. If we give the right kind of attention, we shall not only see, but we shall see more than we see.

We shall see not only the light that shines on things, but also the light that shines through things. All nature becomes a translucent veil through which the spiritual pours its light and inspiration into our hearts. Thus we find our way to the Unknown through the known; to the Invisible through the visible; to the Infinite through the finite. And so we advance through the Kingdom of our Mind to the Kingdom of the World Mind.

The human mind can understand and interpret only that which is itself the product of mind. If this is true of a musical score, it is no less true of this great piece of cosmic music that we call the universe. If there is meaning to the twenty-six letters of the alphabet only when they have been arranged by mind into words and sentences and paragraphs, so also we must conclude that a universe which has order and laws which the human mind can understand must itself be a product of Mind.

Christopher Morley, in his *Safe and Sane*, declares: "My theology, briefly, Is that the Universe Was Dictated But not Signed." Probably if he had looked more diligently he might have found the signature. We are now reading the record written in the pages of the rocks. We are interpreting the laws of chemistry and physics and astronomy. We are translating this amazing book of the universe, with its chapters on geology, and chemistry, and physics, and astronomy, and anthropology. This explains why the greatest scientists of the age are also believers in God, such scientists, for instance, as Einstein, as Arthur Compton and Robert Millikan, as Eddington and Sir James Jeans. Einstein, generally accepted as the foremost scientist of this generation, says: "My religion consists of a humble admiration of the illimitable superior spirit who reveals himself in the slight details we are able to perceive with our frail and feeble minds. That deeply emotional conviction of the presence of a superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God."

It would be tragical to talk learnedly about the mechanism of the universe, but to ignore the Mechanician; to know the garden, but not the Gardener; to enjoy the mammoth painting that we call the cosmos, but to be ignorant of the Divine Artist; to be acquainted with the creation, but not to recognize the Creator.

This intellectual concept of God is forced upon us by the logic of scientific fact. Happy are we, if under the inspiration of revealed religion, the intellectual concept can be unfolded and developed into a vital and experimental faith, such as was expressed by Maltbie D. Babcock.

"This is my Father's world,
And to my listening ears.
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres.

This is my Father's world;
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas;
His hand the wonders wrought."

If the kingdom of our mind enters into a vital alliance with the World Mind, then we must apply this reasonable faith. We must make our lives square with our profession. The best psychologists know that there should always be practical fulfillment of every good emotion or impulse. We are familiar with the practice of certain business and professional men of putting on the walls of their offices suggestive mottoes. I know one man who keeps in front of him the word THINK blown up in big white block letters on a nebulated ground of black. All of which prompts me to share with you a little poem I came across recently, which reads as follows:

"You may bring to your office and put in a frame
A motto as fine as its paint;
But if you're a crook when you're playing the game,
That motto won't make you a saint.

You may stick up placards all over the hall,
But here is the word I announce:
It isn't the motto that hangs on the wall,
But the motto you live that counts.

If your motto says SMILE, and you carry a frown;
DO IT NOW, and you linger and wait;
If your motto says HELP, and you trample men down;
If your motto says LOVE, and you hate,—

You can't get away with the mottoes you stall,
For the truth will come forth with a bounce:
It isn't the motto that hangs on the wall,
But the motto you live that counts."

So also what counts is not some intellectual assent to scientific logic or to creedal dogma, but the practical expression you give to your belief. True religion is always more a matter of life and experience than it is of dogma. One time Jesus was talking to His Disciples about the dignity of lowly service, and then He summed it up in these words: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." For the sake of clearness, let us shift the punctuation: "If ye know these things happy are ye,—*if ye do them.*"

The natural application of our faith in the Kingdom of the World Mind is to make our lives square with what we know to be the will of the Divine Sovereign of that Kingdom. Reduced to simplest terms, that means that we are to love God with all our mind, heart, soul and strength, and our neighbor as ourself. We must keep step with the Commandants of God against all the forces that oppose us. We must make our attitudes conform to the Beatitudes. We must "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteusness." We will reverence the sacred value of personality, stand for the essential equality of individual human rights, promote the brotherhood of man as interpreted by the Golden Rule, glorify serv-

ice as the standard of true greatness, embody faith as the means, and self-sacrificing love as the motive of the Kingdom of God, and will consecrate ourselves to live and work for the domination of ideas, purposes, and intentions of the most lofty and sacred sort.

"He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love."

Thus do we make ourselves co-workers together with God, establishing upon this earth the sovereignity of great and holy principles whose royalty will survive the splendor of material pomp, a Kingdom which is a human, universal, spiritual emancipation.

Along these lines do I charge you to build a new world.

"Beat down you beetling mountain,
And raise yon jutting cape:
A world is on the anvil,
Now smite it into shape.

Whence comes this iron music
Whose sound is heard afar?
The hammers of the world's smiths
Are beating out a star."