The Most Interesting Man I Ever Met

Tells How Anyone Can Easily Develop This Power—How a Strong Personality Helps in a Business and Social Way

PEOPLE have always been my hobby. My greatest enjoyment is to listen to what they have to say—to draw them out and learn in what things they are most interested. And you have no idea how rarely I find a man or woman with more than a single interest outside of his humdrum duties.

Men usually are fluent only when talking about their own business or sport. Women—at least most I've met—can talk of little other than household duties and their children. And yet they are well educated. Many have been to college, but, sad as it is, they have forgotten all that they learned. And what a pity!

Instead of broadening out as they grow older—instead of constantly adding to their fund of information—they have literally gotten into a rut; they are backsliding. And the worst part of it is that they are destroying their ability to enjoy themselves.

But fortunately this condition is not universal. There are, in spite of our manifold distractions and hurried living, a few who do manage to keep up with the really worthwhile things of life, and it is indeed a rare treat to meet them.

A Chance Acquaintance

Not long ago I was coming from Chicago to New York on the Century. After dinner I picked up an acquaintance with a quiet man sitting near me. Starting out with a pleasantry about the weather, we gradually drifted from one subject to another until I looked at my watch and found it was eleven o'clock—three hours had passed and it seemed scarcely but a few moments, so quickly had the time flown.

Never before had I met such a well-informed man. He seemed to know and to love all that is the best in Art; he knew little intimate things about the great writers; he could talk interestingly about almost any place of historical importance, and about the big men of all time. And so it was with Music, with Popular Science, with Nature, and with all the Arts.

Naturally, I was intensely interested in this man. Who was he? Where had he gotten this fund of information? Surely he must be some rich dilettante with nothing to think of but developing his mind.

When we finally got up and decided to turn in for the night I asked him for his card and gave him mine. Picture my amazement when I read the name of a big manufacturer in the Middle West who had a reputation for having pulled himself up by his boot-straps.

Risking a rebuke, I asked him how he had been able to spare the time from his business to master the wonderful store of interesting information of which he was the possessor.

Worth Dollars and Cents

Here is what he said. "A few years ago I began to feel in a very definite way my lack of knowledge—for up to then I had devoted my entire waking hours to business—thought I was too busy—that culture was merely a luxury all right for the idle rich, but not meant for the hard-headed business man.

"Suddenly one day I realized that this attitude was entirely wrong. It was brought forcibly to my attention by a new associate—a young man who had made an amazing success in our line, having attained a reputation out of all proportion to his years. I noticed that this man, in every situation—in any company—seemed to be more at home than any one else. He seemed to have 'something on' the others. He was so easy and confident—such a fluent talker—and made such a telling impression that he seemed to be able to make every one he met do anything he wanted them to.

"I tried to analyze this power—to discover what this man's advantage consisted of—and I found that it was because he knew so many things that the rest of us didn't know—he was broader, better educated—he had developed his cultural side. Not that he was 'high brow,' for he wasn't. He simply had the easy confidence that I've since learned always comes with an acquaintance with the great Masters in every field.

"Right then I determined to somehow find the time to improve myself—and I made an amazing discovery. But before I tell you how easy and simple the solution has been I want to say that I consider the things I've learned—the ability to talk and think other things than business—one of the greatest assets I possess. Not only in the pleasure I have gained, but in the actual dollar and cents benefit I have secured in a business way. Personality is one of the greatest powers in business, and culture—if you want to call what I've gained by that name—is the backbone of personality.

"I gained all this by joining the Mentor Association. Reading a few minutes each day one of the numbers in its course in Popular Education solved the problem of finding time to keep up with the finer things in life."

The Mentor Association

The Mentor Association is a group of men and women, now numbering two hundred thousand readers, who have determined to learn just one new worth-while thing every day. Isn't that a wonderful idea—to learn one new thing—a really important thing—each day, instead of trying to cram their heads full and really learning practically nothing worth while?

And it is really marvelous, the ground that can be covered in this way in just a few minutes each evening. Had I not seen an example of what can be learned, and heard the story from his own lips, I would never have believed it. All this man's appreciation and knowledge of the great works of the big masters in all the fields of art, his wonderfully interesting viewpoint on travel and nature, had come from his membership in the Mentor Association—by learning one new thing each day.

And he told me that his wife and children got as much out of his membership as he did, that it had made the greatest difference in the world in the children's attitude toward their school—that it had made them love to study, whereas formerly they dreaded school!

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