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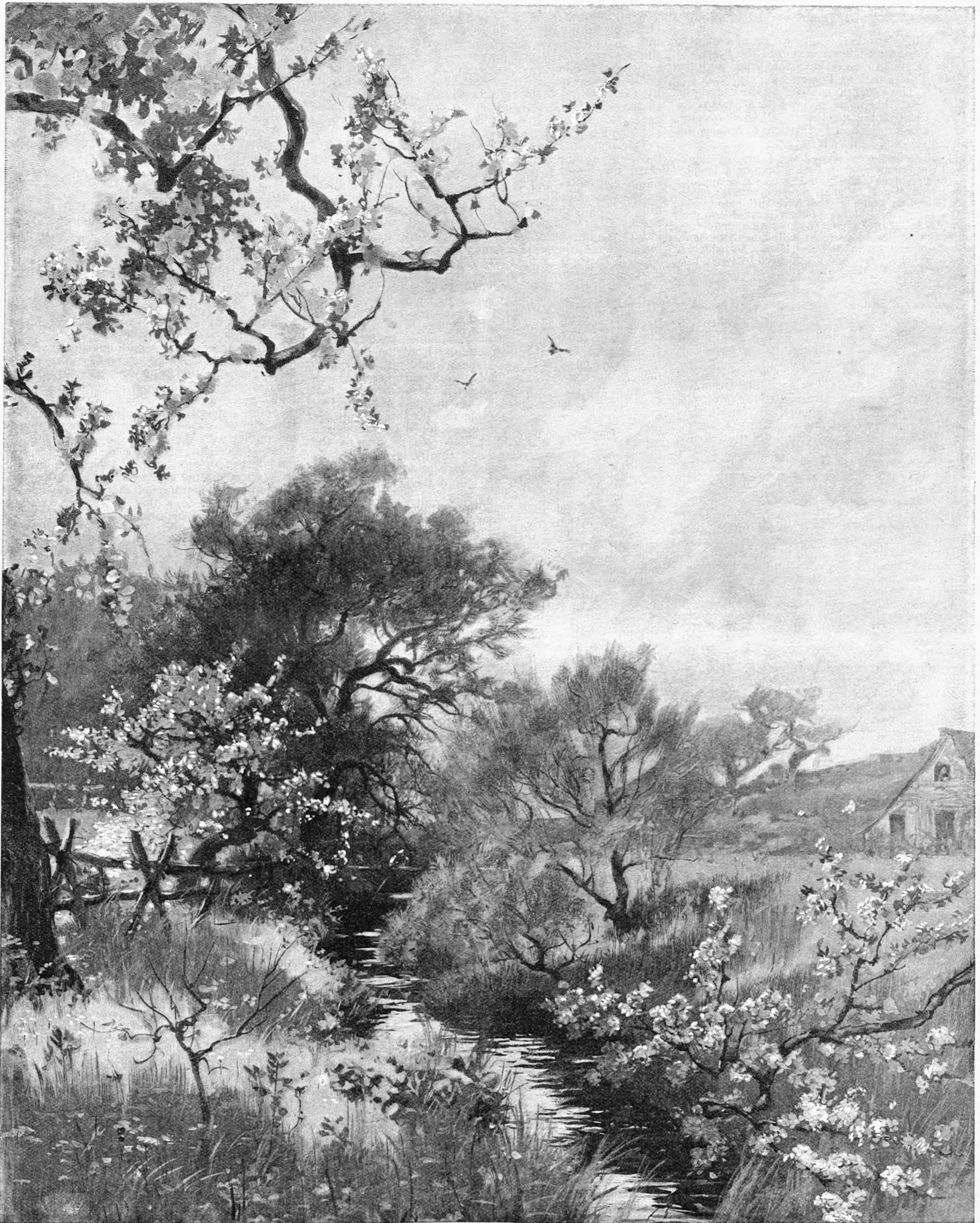
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GOD'S MIRACLE OF MAY

By Frank Dempster Sherman

DRAWING BY W. HAMILTON GIBSON

THERE CAME A MESSAGE TO THE VINE,
A WHISPER TO THE TREE;
THE BLUE-BIRD SAW THE SECRET SIGN
AND MERRILY SANG HE!
AND LIKE A SILVER STRING THE BROOK
TREMBLED WITH MUSIC SWEET—
ENCHANTING NOTES IN EVERY NOOK
FOR ECHO TO REPEAT.

A MAGIC TOUCH TRANSFORMED THE FIELDS,
GREENER EACH HOUR THEY GREW,
UNTIL THEY SHONE LIKE BURNISHED SHIELDS
ALL JWELED O'ER WITH DEW.
SCATTERED UPON THE FOREST FLOOR
A MILLION BITS OF BLOOM
BREATHED FRAGRANCE FORTH THRO' MORNING'S DOOR
INTO THE DAY'S BRIGHT ROOM.

THEN BUD BY BUD THE VINE CONFESSED
THE SECRET IT HAD HEARD,
AND IN THE LEAVES THE AZURE-BREAST
SANG THE DELIGHTFUL WORD:
GLAD FLOWERS UPSPRANG AMID THE GRASS
AND FLUNG THEIR BANNERS GAY,
AND SUDDENLY IT CAME TO PASS—
GOD'S MIRACLE OF MAY!

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SHALL WE SEND OUR BOY TO COLLEGE?
By Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, D. D.

WHAT depends a great deal on the boy. It might not be best for him to go to college; it might not be best for the community that he should. College can fit a man for life, and, also, it can unfit him. There are styles of education that disqualify the student for doing what he is competent to do, without qualifying him to do that which he might like to do, but for which he lacks, and always will lack, the prerequisites. Agriculturalists tell us that there are soils which, if left mostly to themselves, will bear a very respectable crop of a certain order, but which, if considerably cultivated, will neither bear a crop of that order nor of any other. Soil and brain are not so widely differenced as not to be subject, within certain limits, to the same laws. As a general principle, the more a man knows the better, but so long as the present order of things continues a great amount of very ordinary work will require to be done; and ordinary people will do ordinary work better than extraordinary people will, and be a great deal more comfortable while doing it. Hordes of both sexes are entering college for the reason that they do not enjoy doing commonplace things. The result is that commonplace things are left undone, and uncommonplace things fare still worse.

SHREWDNESS does not imply big-mindedness. I might say with a good deal of assurance that it implies the contrary. And shrewdness has more than anything else to do with the acquisition of gain. I am not defining words here, but trying to use them in the sense usually accepted. Shrewdness among men is a good deal the same thing that sharpness is among knives, razors and scissors, and is less suggestive of largeness than it is of blade thinned down to an edge. This is not disparaging the quality of the material. The sharpest razors can be drawn down only from the best steel, but, nevertheless, the reason they can cut is because there is so little to them at the point where they take hold. Much the same thing can be asserted of other experts as well as of the money expert. There are a great many things that can be best done by the man who does not know too much, or, at least, by the man whose intelligence is concentrated at a single point or along a single line. The mechanic who has come to be known among us as the "Wizard" would, perhaps, have been more of a man if he had gone to Harvard, but it would probably have spoiled him as a "wizard." Genius is presumably always a species of mania, and liable, therefore, to become something very ordinary if successfully subjected to the processes of the asylum. They had better be kept away from college if the design is to make them experts. College will be able to give them a character of "all-roundness," but a knife cannot be round and sharp at the same time; neither can a boy. It is true that there are what are called business colleges, where the monopolizing purpose is to make the students into business experts, money-making experts. It is unfortunate that such schools are called colleges, for to the degree in which they fulfill their advertised purpose they cease to embody the college idea. Such "colleges" do not aim to deepen and expand their students, but to sharpen them for business life, and perform, therefore, only the same part that the grindstone and the hone do in preparing the razor for the cutlery shop.

THIS leads up directly to the second class of results toward which men strive, and for which either of what are called the learned professions would suffice as example. We are now on ground quite distinct from that occupied by the expert. We are quite out of the region of shrewdness, crankiness and mania. In dealing with our physician, our lawyer, or our clergyman we want a man with trained powers and with balanced powers. In that I have combined in a single sentence the two purposes of the college. The object of such an institution is not to fit a man for any specific occupation or calling. College is not a grindstone nor a whetstone. In its true intention it stands in the same relation to mind that the gymnasium does to body. Men do not practice in a gymnasium in order that they may learn how to perform any specific variety of physical labor, but in order that they may be in muscular condition to do anything that may come to them to be done, or, still better, that their body may be at its completest and its best. So if we are going to do large intelligent work the prime condition is the possession of an intellect trained and stocked in the same general and comprehensive way. College training is simply the process of intellectually getting ready, not getting ready for this, that or the other specific mental service, but simply getting ready—planting down a broad foundation of preliminary big enough to support any breadth or height of superstructure that there may be need or opportunity to put upon it. There are two criticisms which ardent and practical young men are likely to pass upon the purpose of college training as thus stated, one of which is that it involves an infeasible expenditure of time. Graduates are themselves the best judges upon this matter. The college course and the requisite preparatory training costs about seven years of the best and most possible period of a man's life. There may be circumstances in the case that forbid such expenditure. Considerations of health, means, dependencies, may necessitate a different mode of life and a pecuniarily remunerative one; but if a young man hopes to do a large, solid work in the world, a work in which intelligence of a broad kind is to play any considerable part, and there is no antecedent obstacle in the way, he makes an irreversible mistake if he considers seven years too much to pay for a liberal education.

IF the practical youngster considers such an expenditure of ten per cent. of his lifetime impracticable it needs to be said that there is nothing more misleading than the "practical" conclusions arrived at by inexperience. The time a man spends in getting ready is never wasted time. The value of a man's work is not determined nearly as much by its quantity as by its quality, and quality is the correlate of preparation. If I may refer to myself, I commenced what may be called my life's work when I was thirty-three. Up to that time I was simply finishing the preliminaries and had no definite purpose for the future. More men scrimp the effects of their life by beginning too early than by beginning too late. If they die young it makes little difference how much time they spend in apprenticeship, and if they live to a ripe age it makes a great deal of difference. It is rather a suggestive fact that nine-tenths of our Lord's life He spent in preparation.

I AM only dealing just now with the general proposition that because it takes seven years to reach the end of a college course is no kind of reason at all why a man should not take a college course. So far from its not being practical it is the most severely practical thing he can do, just as the most practical thing an architect can first do in putting up a building is not to build, but to excavate; and the higher he expects to build up the more time he will use up in digging down. It is safe to say that ninety-five out of a hundred college graduates would take no exception to my statement. Another criticism prompted by the utilitarian spirit, particularly if inexperienced, will be that the college occupies itself so much with what has no direct bearing upon the ordinary questions of life. To any one who has yielded himself vigorously to the discipline of the college curriculum such a criticism appears just about as reasonable as it would for a man to object to certain dishes placed before him at table on the ground that he was unable to follow each crumb and drop to the particular function it discharges in the anatomy and physiology of the body. It is a sad pity that our college authorities are to such a degree succumbing to this shallow skepticism, and that they are so largely allowing the idea that a college is an institution for the comprehensive upbuilding of a man, to be replaced by the idea that it is a sort of whetting shop where dull steel can be ground to an edge, or a kind of cabinet shop where unshaped timber can be worked down and fitted to a particular niche in the business of life. In this way instead of being the fosterer of intelligence pure and simple the college is coming to be utilized to a considerable degree as a contrivance for teaching mind to do specific things and play particular tricks. Still the old idea is deeply rooted, and there is conservatism enough, I hope, to insure its maintenance. The question to be settled is not what particular studies will be the means of securing the graduate quickest admission to the activities of life, but what are the studies that are best fitted to make his mind distinct and vigorous in every direction, so that he will be soundly intelligent and equipped even for uncalculated emergencies.

I can say for myself that those studies which seemed to me when in college least prolific in probable practical result have in the issue shown themselves to be just the ones that have been most practical and prolific in their yield. Those powers of mind which are the most necessary are in many a student the very ones that are least feebly present, and the ones, therefore, to which the most attention needs to be given rather than the least. A student's fondness for a particular branch, and his ability to appreciate in advance the advantages of a particular branch, suggest absolutely nothing as to the desirability of prosecuting that branch. The trouble with hosts of people is that they want to get results without earning them. Young men fix their eyes upon those who have attained a measure of success, and conceive that there is a possibility of their attaining to the same success without squarely and honestly paying for it. We never obtain what we have not except by the laborious exertion of what we have. There are no royal roads; there are no short cuts which do not in the end demonstrate themselves to be the longest and most circuitous routes in existence. College life is long and laborious. It costs money, and other things that are still more expensive than money; but it is the best expedient yet devised for securing in a man that completeness of equipment which will enable him to win his way in the world, where so immense a proportion of the problems have to be solved by intelligence that is trained, balanced and on the alert.

In my next article (in response to a request received from one of my readers) I want to say something as to the means by which one who for any reason is not able to go to college can best make up to himself the loss which he thereby suffers.

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EDITOR'S NOTE—The fourth of a series of articles by Rev. Parkhurst addressed to young men, which began in the JOURNAL of February, 1896, and will continue throughout the year.

C. H. Parkhurst