

Anticipation

I have been accused of being a pessimist. Perhaps I am. If by pessimism my accusers mean the discrediting of future pleasures, I must admit I am a pessimist. I have been disappointed so often that I can no longer indulge in that happy state of expectancy, anticipation.

I say 'happy' because I know, from past experience and from observing others, that anticipating pleasure is a pleasure in itself; and very often a greater pleasure than its realization. Knowing this, I sometimes regret that I am a pessimist. But I find that the loss in this respect is a gain in other ways. Feeling, as I do, that the future will be no better than the present, makes it easier to be contented with conditions as they now exist.

I was not always devoid of anticipatory powers. As a child I used to look forward, as all children do, to the coming of a circus to town as an event which would not only bring a continuous period of pleasure during the stay of the circus, but would brighten the remaining days of my life with glamorous memories. But when the long-wished for day came, words cannot describe the reaction that took place in my mind. Disillusionment is a big word, but it would have to be many times bigger to be in proportion with its meaning. A sore heals quickly in childhood, however, and the next time a circus came to the village I would again bask in the glowing warmth of enthusiasm,—and again be plunged into the cold waters of disillusionment.

I believe it is a common idea among children that, when they become young men and women, their lives will be continuous rounds of pleasure. By just what manner of logic they arrive at this conclusion, I cannot say, but I think the liberty which they believe their elders possess is the chief reason for it. But when little Johnny is put to bed at eight o'clock, just after Dad, or Big Brother has set out for one of those mysterious and longed-for affairs called 'dances,' does it ever occur to him that, as the dance is being sponsored by an organization of which Dad, or Brother is a member, attendance at it may be a matter of duty rather than pleasure? Of course it doesn't! But when he grows older and gains the liberties of manhood, and, incidentally the responsibilities, he may some-

times wish to be once more little Johnny, climbing into bed at eight o'clock.

During my last years in primary school the chief subject of my many day dreams was how I should conduct myself when I should go to college, or more especially when home from college on vacations. In these day dreams I usually planned to follow as closely as possible in the footprints of the hero in whatever college story I had read most recently. There was little or no mention of classes in those stories. The chief occupation of students seemed to be playing games and frequenting places of amusement. Of course I was not such a dupe as to be wholly taken in by those stories, but they left an impression on my mind, and in spite of myself I could not help half-expecting college life to be such as was pictured in them. In this case I only half-hoped; therefore I was only half-disappointed.

During my first year at college I planned for two months how I would spend a vacation of less than three weeks. As a result, those two months were punctuated with ecstatic moments of anticipation; but my all-absorbing occupation during the three weeks of vacation consisted in nursing a misbehaving molar. This was the final blow to my powers of anticipation.

People plan for the time when their circumstances will be bettered. Their thoughts go thus: "If I can only get that promotion, the increase in my salary will enable me to enjoy life to its fullest extent." They may get their promotion, but what difference will it make for them? They will have more money, more friends, will frequent more and better places of entertainment, but will they be happy?

Perhaps so. It all depends on what they consider happiness. For my part I do not believe that all the pleasures of the world could bring happiness as my mind conceives it. And therefore I do not expect to attain it in any future pleasure.

—J. M. '34

Remember this,—that there is a proper dignity and proportion to be observed in the performance of every act of life.—*Marcus Aurelius*.