

# "Mine and Thine," A Study In Real Ownership

An address that is entirely out of the beaten path so closely followed in the preparation and delivery of commencement day orations was listened to with marked interest last night at Barratt hall by a large and highly intelligent and thoroughly appreciative audience. The subject was "Mine and Thine," a study in real ownership, and the speaker was N. L. Nelson, professor of philosophy in the Brigham Young university at Provo. The occasion was the fifth annual commencement of the L. D. S. U. So much attention did the address attract that it is herewith reproduced:

Not long ago, an American millionaire of recent crop, entered a bookseller's establishment in New York and dazzled the clerks by the magnificence



BOY GRADUATES OF THE L. D. S. UNIVERSITY.

of his purchases. He wanted the best private library in America, and his list of books included the greatest names in the world of letters—all to be furnished in the most costly bindings.

"And now," he said contemptuously, "when his last orders were booked, 'now, I'd like something to read. Got anything from Old Sleuth?'

Query: What does it mean to own a great library?

Let us in imagination follow these books on their journey to the castle walls where they are to abide. Remote from the noisy city, we shall behold newly risen in the heart of nature's scenery, a marble mansion such as no prince of the old world could afford even in dreams. Surrounding it we shall see ten thousand acres of woodland, lately transformed into a landscape garden, whose wealth of trees, flowers, and shrubs, are continually budding forth from every corner. Within the palaces, and adjoining the library, we enter a gallery filled with treasures such as only a world ripe as our own could bring together. From its canary walls and marbled groups breathe forth the souls of a thousand masters whose hands have crumpled in the grave.

Query: What does it mean to own a residence, such a mansion, such a collection of art? No doubt our mushroom Croesus guests in secret believe he can say: "Mine—all mine!" And his pleasure, such as it is, perhaps takes on a keener edge to hear his various fellow mortals cry: "His—all his!"

But is it possible for such a man to own these things? Setting aside the mere tact of legal title—because of other irrelevancies which render of this type he said ready to possess? Can

greeness—precisely such a picture as appears to the eye of the ox or the ass!

A man can possess only what he can appreciate. Moreover, the depth and intensity of his ownership can be measured, not on a monetary basis, but only by the degree in which his soul assimilates the beautiful, and the true in the object possessed.

Real wealth is that which becomes part of the soul's structure. It never vanishes, nor does it pass away. Remote from the noisy city, we shall behold newly risen in the heart of nature's scenery, a marble mansion such as no prince of the old world could afford even in dreams. Surrounding it we shall see ten thousand acres of woodland, lately transformed into a landscape garden, whose wealth of trees, flowers, and shrubs, are continually budding forth from every corner. Within the palaces, and adjoining the library, we enter a gallery filled with treasures such as only a world ripe as our own could bring together. From its canary walls and marbled groups breathe forth the souls of a thousand masters whose hands have crumpled in the grave.

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the soul which is attuned to "Old Sleuth" have any part in Goethe and Shakespeare? Under the stimulus of nabol competition, he may, indeed, assemble about him architects, painters and sculptors—the artistic geniuses of the race, but can he come into spiritual accord with their works? Impossible. The joys of ownership in art which can come to him, must have no higher source than the pages of the Police Gazette.

And as for the magnificent park on which he has lavished his millions, what part of it can be really called "mine" or "my great talents"? Only the drive along which his automobile thunders, the path which his automobile thunders, the path which marks the trail of his scented cigar and tainted breath. As for the rest, the enchanting effect of arrangement, color, and contour in nature's verdure, the kaleidoscopic changes of sunlight in its never-ending play of tints and shades—what is all this to him but an undifferentiated expanse

of slaves. A few hundred dollars a year suffice for all my wants—I can't spend more without feeling the pain of wastefulness. What, then, of my accumulating millions? Instead of my owning them, it would be true to say they own me."

As to the kind of wealth which must be measured in dollars and cents, very little of it can be transferred into money or great talents? Only the drive along which his automobile thunders, the path which marks the trail of his scented cigar and tainted breath. As for the rest, the enchanting effect of arrangement, color, and contour in nature's verdure, the kaleidoscopic changes of sunlight in its never-ending play of tints and shades—what is all this to him but an undifferentiated expanse

of intelligence, and intelligence is glory, simply because it is power.

Such growth in soul-wealth may well be compared to mounting a stairway—especially if we think of Jacob's stairway. The rise or lift of each step represents the new truth or harmony, or insight into the nature of the universe, with which the will to live is impelled. In this way, in getting this insight, we may still remain standing on the step below, content with the mere joy of knowing. If, however, we would merge our knowledge into character, that is to say, intelligence, we must take the tread. We are thus one step nearer heaven than before, and wider has grown the span of our mental horizon. Thus, by a repetition of lifts and treads, we may at last fulfil Christ's injunction: "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."

And this reference to our Savior's perspective of human life, serves to show how thinly disguised is my psychological explanation of soul-growth. For what is the lift in the heavenly stairway, but faith—the triumph of rightness over wrong, whereby we live up to the new truth so revealed? Or should we desire to vary the figure, the lift may be called grace and the tread works. Neither one avails for salvation without the other. Nor do I regret this intermingling of the educational with the religious point of view, for it will show that the sphere of religion, like that of true education, is the enlargement of the soul; not indeed along narrow, sometimes tiresome lines, but in every direction in which the soul is naked to the universe.

Real ownership is but another name for life. A man lives only in that which he appreciates. Nor is it money alone which intrudes and impoverishes life. Right or wrong, salvation kind, has the same end in view, toward the rot.

Think of the man whose world has narrowed down to a few mechanical interests, and who has become a machine for turning soft loaf bread; or worse still, who is but a single cog in a thou-sand-wheel factory, is poor, indeed, even though he be well-fed, well-clad, and well-housed. And the saddest aspect of it all is that his life is so subject that he does not know he is poor—does not know what wealth is, eye and ear, and thought, and feeling and imagination lies free to him on every hand in this wonderful home of his Father's providing. The man of money may perchance have once been aware of all these things, and out of sheer sympathy let them fall away. He scarcely deserves our sympathy, therefore. But the eyes of the drudge have never been opened. Thanks to God's scheme of endless changes, death will perhaps compel him to see.

But leaving general aspects aside, let us take more specific view of the conditions of real wealth and its ownership. In one place, think that himself in a world so filled with the swing of mere muscular automatism, or who has become a machine for turning soft loaf bread; or worse still, who is but a single cog in a thou-sand-wheel factory, is poor, indeed, even though he be well-fed, well-clad, and well-housed. And the saddest aspect of it all is that his life is so subject that he does not know he is poor—does not know what wealth is, eye and ear, and thought, and feeling and imagination lies free to him on every hand in this wonderful home of his Father's providing. The man of money may perchance have once been aware of all these things, and out of sheer sympathy let them fall away. He scarcely deserves our sympathy, therefore. But the eyes of the drudge have never been opened. Thanks to God's scheme of endless changes, death will perhaps compel him to see.

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