

THE WORD

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MOMENTS WITH FRIENDS.

How can one protect himself against the lies or slander of others?

By being honest in thought, truthful in speech, and just in action. If a man will think no lie and is truthful in speech, lies or slander cannot prevail against him. In view of the seeming injustice and unmerited slander in the world, this statement would not appear to be borne out by facts. Yet, it is true. No one wishes to be slandered; no one wishes to be lied about; but the majority of people do lie about and slander others. Perhaps the lie is only a little one, a "white lie"; perhaps the slander is only done in the way of gossip, to make conversation. Nevertheless, a lie is a lie, however it may be colored or called. The fact is, it is difficult to find anyone who thinks honestly, speaks truthfully and acts justly. One may admit this statement to be generally true of others, but he is likely to deny it if it is applied to him. His denial, however, proves the statement true in his case, and he is his own victim. The universal habit of crying out against lies and denouncing slander in general, but not decreasing our contributions to the supply, causes and keeps so large a variety and stock of the commodity in active circulation, and causes those who have to do with the supply to be so susceptible to or injured by lies and slander.

A lie is in the moral world what murder is in the physical world. The one who tries to murder would kill the physical body. The one who lies about another injures or attempts to destroy the character of that other. If the would-be murderer can find no entrance for his weapon in his intended victim's physical body, he will not succeed in his attempt at murder, and it is likely that when caught he will suffer the penalty of his act. To prevent the entrance into his body of the murderer's weapon, the intended victim must have protected himself by a coat of armor or some thing which resists the attack. The murderer in the moral world uses a lie, falsehood, slander, as his weapons. With these he attacks the character of his intended victim. To protect himself against the murderer's weapons, the intended victim must have armor about him. Honesty in thought, truthfulness in speech, and justice in act, will build about him an

armor invulnerable to attacks. This armor is not seen, but neither is a lie or slander seen, nor is character seen. Though not seen, these things are more real than is a pistol, a knife, or armor of steel. A lie or slander cannot affect the character of one who is guarded by honesty and truthfulness, because truthfulness and honesty are permanent virtues; lies and slander are their opposites, and are vices which are impermanent. A lie cannot prevail against a truth. Slander cannot prevail against honesty. But if instead of being honest in his thought a man thinks lies and speaks falsely, his thinking and speech make his character vulnerable and negative to the positive lies or slander aimed at him. If, however, his character is protected by an armor made of his honesty in thought and truthfulness in speech, then the weapons aimed at him will recoil on the one who hurled them and who will himself suffer the consequences of his own act. Such is the law in the moral world. He who injures another's character by lies and slander will in turn suffer from the falsehoods of others, though the penalty may be deferred. It is better for one's murderous intentions toward another to at once recoil on him and from the armor of honesty and truthfulness of his intended victim, because he is more likely to see and will the sooner see the futility of wrong thought and action, and will the sooner learn not to lie, not to do wrong because he cannot do wrong without injury to himself. After he has learned that he must not do wrong if he would avoid the penalty of wrong, he will soon learn to do right because it is right and best.

Little "white lies" and idle slander are not the little harmless things which they appear to be to unseeing eyes. They are the seeds of murders and other crimes, though much time may intervene between the planting of the seeds and the reaping of the fruit.

When one tells a lie which is undetected, he is sure to tell another, and another, until he is found out; and he becomes a hardened liar, confirmed in the habit. When one lies, he invariably tells another lie to hide his first, and a third to hide the two, and so on until his lies contradict each other and stand out as strong witnesses against him. The more successful he at first is in adding to the number of his lies, the more overwhelmed and crushed will he be when these children of his thought are summoned to bear witness against him. One who protects himself by honesty, truthfulness, justice, in his thought and speech and action, will not merely protect himself from attacks of falsehood and slander; he will teach how not to attack him those who would attack him and how they protect themselves by having an invisible though invulnerable armor. He

will be a true philanthropist because of the moral strength which others have been stimulated to develop. He will be a true reformer, by the establishment of honesty, truthfulness and justice in thought and speech. So with the ceasing crime, houses of correction will be done away with and prisons abolished, and with active minds, man will have happiness and will perceive what freedom is.

A FRIEND [H. W. Percival]



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