

# LESSONS FROM A RIVER

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BY THE TRANQUIL hometown of my grandparents there flows a river. For many a time I have visited it, during vacation spent with my old folks, viewing the quiet flow of the river. I met the river again on a summer vacation.

In common with other streams of its kind, this river suffers much from the summer heat. I have seen it so shrunken that fishes lay lifeless on the parched sand and gravel of its bed; but this past summer I noticed something which I never saw before.

One hot, summer morning, a friend and I started out for the hills to spend the day by the rapids. We followed the course of the river. After we had covered a kilometer or more, I observed that the river had disappeared, and only the dry bed was to be seen. I looked around in wonder because past my grandparents' cottage and out to the sea half a mile or so away, the river was flowing clear and steady in its usual summer depth.

But at the place where we stood at that moment, there was no water anywhere to be seen. All about us the wide river bed was hot and dry.

On toward the hills we continued our way, and not until we had covered another kilometer or so, did we see the stream again, at the point where it had spread itself so thin, that it was lost at the edge of the waterless stretch of scorched sand and stones. But as we continued our way into the hills, we found the river stronger and deeper than as it passed by our cottage.

For many people, I suppose, there is nothing strange or significant in this. Perhaps they have seen such phenomenon more than once.

To me however, it was a new experience and it gave a strangeness. But it wasn't merely strange to me. To me, it was awfully suggestive of spiritual truths that can inspire and teach lessons of highly considerable values.

One of the thoughts that immediately came to my mind was the lesson of determination and struggle. Flowing from its source in the mountains, just as it was leaving the last foothills, behind, it was checked by the long, restraining stretch of sand. I had read of other streams that upon confronting similar obstacles inevitably lost themselves in sand. But this river, determined to reach the sea, tunneled its way, so to say, under its sandy bed, until at last, at the end of the long obstacle, it came out steady on its march to the sea.

And then I thought of human en-

deavor. I was reminded of many lives that stopped short of greatness only because they lacked the power of will to "tunnel through" obstacles. But I thought most of all those who, like the river, confronted with nearly prevailing hindrances but, undespairs, continued their struggle, buried in precious hopes but persistently pushing their way to the sea, to the sea of their life's great goal. I remember the words of many great men, one of them, Baden Powell, the founder of Boy Scouting, who said, "You can't always succeed without failures. Let the failures be stepping stones to success." I'm reminded of Benjamin Franklin who, having failed more than a thousand times in the same experiment, succeeded to become the inventor of the electric light. The irrefutable and exalted lives all remind us what that river has taught us; the lesson of determination and struggle to the goal of success.

Another lesson I learned from that river is in the fact that the river was not only able to overcome its barriers but to reach a great end, the sea.

How different with so many lives! How different that many persons in the springtime of their youth and in manhood appeared apparently victorious over barriers, determined to reach a goal, only to end in disgrace and disillusion.

A few years back, during my high school days, I happened to room with a

student who, the same as I did, studied in a university in another city. He had a quiet, unassuming, yet impressive personality. For he made good in academic pursuit. He maintained a successful path into graduating as an honor student. We parted ways and I haven't heard from him until somebody, who we both know, told me that he and my erstwhile roommate were together in college. "And how he has changed," he sounded incredulously! "Well, what year is he now?" I asked. "Believe it or not," he exclaimed, "he's still a sophomore when he should be a senior student!"

On the other hand, let's think of other lives that, like the river, kept true to the very end of their course.

Did the river flow without purpose? No, it didn't, for it furnished safe and running water for plants and fish and fowl and for man and beast. Indeed, it just didn't flow in and enjoy itself, but it played its part in the process of nature. I believe that it should be so with man's life. It is not to be lived for itself alone for its own joy and satisfaction, but for others in glad and devoted ministry. How thankful we should be to doctors and missionaries, who ventured into the dark forests of rudimentary civilizations, who met overwhelming odds, who gave comfort and health and knowledge to their fellowmen.

For if man, who in the face of obstacles, lacks the strength of will to go on ready to serve, he will ultimately become useless to others.

Lessons from the tranquil, placid flow of a river—so mysterious, so significant—but do men see them? §

## AUDIO-VISUAL COMMUNICATION

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Man learns to perceive, to conceptualize, and to generalize through the medium of his senses and to acquire attitudes through the totality of his involvement as a person. Through audiovisual communication, this encompassing learning experience which of necessity must be supplied vicariously during many instances in the learning process is what we are after as means to achieve better and "permanent" learning in the students. Audiovisual communication viewed this way is realized as something not extrinsic to the teaching-learning activity in the classroom.

Furthermore, contrary to the opinions of educational enthusiasts, if we may call them, audiovisual communication cannot substitute for the teacher's role. This is true even when the latest instructional media as the multi-channel approach with the use of closed circuit TV-computer combination for immediate retrieval of information and direct test-

scoring is used in teaching. True, modern space-age learning devices may modify drastically the traditional activity of the teacher in the classroom. It is wise for the teacher to reckon with this progress. However, he should not be led to believe that he has no place in the automation of the teaching-learning process. Machines can only facilitate human learning. They can never satisfy the need for the humanizing element in education. For the teacher, his prime responsibility will always be to understand how to use intelligently the simple as well as the advanced audiovisual methods, materials, and equipment which are on hand.

In any case, there is little reason for the teacher to bide by his disappointment at not being understood. The insistence can be indifferent to this problem, but the dedicated ones have much to hope for in the right understanding and application of audiovisual communication in the classroom.