

CHARACTER AND CITIZENSHIP SECTION

BE AN OPTIMIST

WHAT is optimism? It is taking the most hopeful view of things in life. The opposite of optimism is pessimism, which is the taking of the least hopeful view of things. So an optimist is a person who takes the hopeful view, and a pessimist is one who takes the worst view. Which of these two do you and I want to be?

The hope of the earth is the optimist looking forward and believing that all will be well. There are pessimists everywhere, despairing of humanity, believing in the doom of all things.

The difference between the optimist and the pessimist is the difference between knowledge and ignorance. Just now we may feel that evil holds the world, but all history of the past replies that good will come.

If we are to be optimists, let us know *why* we believe. What is the foundation of optimism in a war-torn world like that of today? It is based on history which shows us that all ages have led men on to higher things and greater power, in spite of dark periods of evil like that of the present time.

The mind that understands the past will believe that great things can happen in the future. A few thousand years have opened up the entire field of human knowledge; a few hundred years have "made us masters where we were slaves." What, then, is impossible in the hundreds

and the thousands of years ahead of us?

The promise of what man yet will do is, in the things that man has done, but beyond all possible comparison will be the wonder of the things to come.

"To travel hopefully," says Robert Louis Stevenson, "is a better thing than to arrive." We must travel hopefully.

During the ages since man first appeared, has the movement of the world in general been good or bad?

Good, of course. The present bad condition of some parts of the world is only temporary; good will surely triumph eventually. Believing this is optimism.

At the present moment it would seem that wrong has prevailed in Europe. But this will not endure. Wrong can never

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*Liberty WILL enlighten the world.
If you believe this, you are an optimist.*

GRIEG

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The music was so lovely that it became better liked than the play itself, and finally was arranged in two orchestral suites, giving the whole story in a series of beautiful tone pictures. Some of them are in Norway, and some in far-away Arabia or Egypt.

If you wonder how music can tell a story without words, you have only to listen to one of the most remarkable stories ever told in music—the *Peer Gynt* music by Grieg. *Peer Gynt* is a Norwegian legend of a worthless fellow whose life was dissipated in wandering from one land to another and carousing, while his old mother Ase waited in vain for his return.

During his wanderings, Peer Gynt met an Oriental dancer named Anitra who got all his possessions and then left him. At another time he met the trolls and their king in a hall under the mountains. All these events are told in the music of *Peer Gynt*.

Grieg chose certain events of the story to tell in his music. Those which you will enjoy the most (you can hear them on a phonograph), and which carry the thread of the

story are:

*Morning**Anitra's Dance**Ase's Death**Sunshine Song**In the Hall of the Mountain King**Cradle Song*

Try to hear any of these or all of them at your first opportunity.

In another composition called *March of the Dwarfs* Grieg tells us of the old fairy tales, and in the *Norwegian Bridal Procession* he tells of the quaint marriage customs of the peasant folk. In his compositions entitled *To Spring* and *Butterfly* he has caught the spirit of spring, the song of the birds, and smell of grass and flowers and trees. Grieg never wrote great symphonies, but contented himself with composing beautiful songs and smaller works.

The Northland is a country of mountains and fjords of snow and northern lights, of a rugged race of liberty-loving people. A deep and lasting love of the North warms the hearts of its people. These characteristics Grieg expresses in his music which reminds us of the deep fjords, and dark mountains of Norway, his native land.

Grieg lived in a villa outside of his native city. Here he died in 1907.

BE AN OPTIMIST

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endure. We must be optimists and believe that right will again prevail, and it will. Be an optimist. Liberty *will* enlighten the world. If you believe this, you are an optimist.

And when the entire world is again controlled by the right, in the new age that will come science will give us power, and power will give us leisure. We are beginning to use the power of the sun. The optimist says, Who knows how far that power will take us?

Forever great events are in the making. There is never a day—even in the present terrible world condition—but what *some* good seed is sown that will bear unexpected fruit. There is no limit to the promise of the future. We have among us even now men whose names will endure when some of the stars in the sky have ceased to shine. The world *will* become better. Right *will* conquer wrong. Be an optimist and believe this and do your tiny bit to bring it about.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

1. What is an optimist?
2. What is a pessimist?