

**LETTERS TO MY
SON. VOLUME III**

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Letters to my son. Volume III by William Gibson

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WILLIAM GIBSON

**LETTERS TO MY
SON. VOLUME III**

LETTERS
TO MY SON

By WILLIAM GIBSON



VOLUME III

CLEVELAND
THE CAXTON COMPANY
MCMXVII

LECTURES

INTRODUCTION BY DR. JAMES K. PATTERSON,
PRESIDENT-EMERITUS

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DR. JAMES K. PATTERSON

INTRODUCTION

by

DR. JAMES K. PATTERSON

President-Emeritus

SOME years ago, while still President of the State University of Kentucky, I was one day invited by Professor Anderson, Dean of Mechanical Engineering, to go over to the lecture room of the department to meet and to hear Mr. William Gibson of Pittsburgh in a lecture to the engineering students. I accepted the invitation and met the lecturer and heard the lecture. I had expected a lecture of average interest by a man of average ability. The presence of the lecturer was that of dignified composure. He had not proceeded far before the excellence of the matter made it quite apparent that I was in the presence of no ordinary man. The strength and beauty of the thought presented were embodied in language chaste, vigorous, terse, elegant; the voice was well modulated, the elocution clear and resonant.

The lecture was not long, but it was compact, rich, abounding in wholesome information for the young engineers to whom it was addressed. At its close, his auditors carried away with them the conviction that the highest type of engineer must be a well educated man with mind disciplined by study and by contact with the best thought of mankind throughout the ages;

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that language and literature, and science and art, and philosophy and culture are all essential conditions of the highest type of engineer and that whatever else may be omitted, character, based upon the principles of a sound morality, candor, integrity, a fanaticism for truth, purity of soul are indispensable.

With eloquent language and with powerful insistence he urged that—“*Non possidentem multa roxaveris recte beatum*”^{*}—that the highest type of engineer and consequently the highest type of man,

“Durumque callet pauperiem pati
Pejusque leto flagitium timet
Non ille pro caris amicis
Aut patria timidus perire.”[†]

These views urged with a vigor, an earnestness, an emphasis that were refreshing, made a profound impression upon me. There was no cant, no sensational period, no attempt at oratorical climax. The argument was cogent, the illustrations were appropriate, the conclusions irrefutable. Every auditor felt that to make a great engineer was a task worthy of achievement; but that to make a great man, a great citizen, a great exponent and benefactor of mankind is a higher achievement still; that this is a task beyond the ability of sines and cosines, chemical reactions, strength of materials or the correlation of physical forces to accomplish. To train and to develop the intellectual powers under a moral sanction and for high moral ends; to educate man as man, is the highest aim and the noblest end of education.

The lecture of that day impelled me to seek and to enjoy the further acquaintance of Mr. Gibson. During

^{*}One might call him truly happy who did not possess much.

[†]He who is invited to suffering and poverty and who fears disgrace worse than death will not be afraid to die for his beloved friends or his country.

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his subsequent visits to the State University to lecture before the engineers on technical training and to larger audiences on general literature, I never missed an opportunity to be present and to profit by the message which he had to deliver. His range of acquaintance with the best authors is wide and intimate. Saturated with the best thought of the past and of the present, his facile style of expression enables him to present to an audience the essence of his accumulated stores of information in such a way as to hold the audience spellbound by its strength, its beauty and its charm.

Mr. Gibson is a living and a conspicuous example of the fact that a man may rank high as an engineer and take also high rank as an exponent of the learning and culture which adorn any profession with which he may be associated. The excellent training gotten from an undergraduate course of study in Edinburgh University made of him a successful executive of a great American railroad, but it made him much more; it made him an interpreter of Shakespeare and Burns, of Scott and Carlyle, of Dickens and Thackeray. It lifted him out of the plane of technical routine and possibly of technical drudgery, and brought him into contact with the great thinkers of the past and of the present, with men of ideas as well as realities.

When capacity for organization and administration is associated with broad views of the relations of production to consumption, of supply to demand; and when production is not regarded as an end in itself but as a means to the development of the intellect, the quickening and purifying of the moral sense, the evolu-