



TREMENDOUS

trifles

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TREMENDOUS TRIFLES!

Taken together literally, these two words cancel each other out. Tremendous, my dictionary tells me, means, among other things, "astonishingly large," whereas trifle is defined as "trivial, insignificant." Thus my "tremendous trifles" turns out to be a nonsensical "astonishingly large trivia."

So much for mere words. But when we analyze the idea, we will realize that it is not so nonsensical after all. For the point is, as you will readily see, that what we sometimes call trifles are only apparently so, and not actually so. If we were to carefully evaluate the trend of our lives, I believe we would discover that the things that have directed us in the way we are going were not the great red-letter moments, but seemingly lesser conditions and events. The really big moments of our lives are often hidden and unrecognized by us as they pass.

To understand how very important little things may be, consider "The Case of the Calamitous Comma."

In 1882 the Forty-Second Congress of the United States of America passed the Tariff Act. In the Act it was specified that "fruit-plants" were to be put on the duty free list. But in printing the list, the printer put a comma instead of a hyphen between "fruit" and "plants," making it read "fruit, plants." As a result fruit importers were able to have a hey day bringing fruit into the country duty free. A special act of Congress was necessary to correct the error (if it was an error), and the United States

Government lost two million dollars in revenue—all because of such a "trifling" thing as a comma.

Success is a big word. The man who has made a true success of life has fulfilled the purpose of life. But seldom indeed is a man found who, with a few mighty leaps, reaches the peak of success. With very few exceptions, the top is reached by slow, painstaking effort; by the doing of small, apparently trifling things. As the old Persian Proverb has it: "Do little things now; so shall big things come to thee by and by, asking to be done." That is the pattern of success. And the person who is unwilling to follow the pattern will never achieve success.

I believe it was Benjamin Franklin who said, "Life is made up of trifles, but life is no trifle." In the words of Sir Humphrey Davy: "Life is made up, not of great sacrifices or duties, but of little things, in which smiles, and kindnesses, and small obligations, given habitually, are what win and preserve the heart and secure comfort."

"For want of a nail, a shoe was lost;

"For want of a shoe, a horse was lost;

"For want of a horse, the rider was lost;

"For want of the rider, the battle was lost."

Tremendous trifles! We meet them every day in one way or another; "trifles" in honesty, in loyalty, in self-control, in scores of ways. In truth, when we examine their influence upon the total area of life, we are virtually led to conclude that there are few matters that can actually be classed as trifles.

minute meditations