



# THE BRAIN, THE MIND, AND THE CHARACTER

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THE human brain is the most wonderful instrument of creation, as may be illustrated by the suggestion of a Soviet scientist a short time ago in regard to the storage capacity of that organ. His estimation was based on the capacity of a chromosomal set. A chromosome is a tiny body found in the cells of most living things. In it are the genes which determine the qualities of an animal or person. A human chromosomal "set" of genes contains about 6,000 million "bits" or units of information. A nerve cell, the scientist says, apparently contains many sets of chromosomes, and could thus store many times

the 6,000 million bits of information "filed" in one chromosomal set.

Going a step further, we learn that the cerebral cortex—that part of the brain with which we think and memorize, and which governs speech—has between 10,000 and 18,000 million nerve cells. Thus mathematically we arrive at a fantastic figure for the number of bits of information the human brain can store. It could theoretically probably accommodate as much information as is stored in a million libraries the size of the United States Library of Congress, which contains something like 13,000,000 books and pamphlets.



It has been estimated that if scientists could design an electronic computer to do the work of a human brain, it would be the size of the 102 storeyed, 1,250 foot high, Empire State Building in New York City.

But the human brain is not merely an extraordinarily wonderful computer for storing and giving out innumerable facts. It has an even more marvellous faculty which science cannot explain; the faculty of consciousness and the power of thought and reason.

We seldom stop to think of the wonders of the mind, and its supreme importance. For example, do you realize that the body is actually the servant of the mind? Take away the mind and the body becomes a pitiable thing which may exist but which hardly lives.

We said that the body is the servant of the mind. But there are some who let the mind become the servant of the body. They give way to the fleshly desires for overeating, for excessive comfort, for luxury, for sex, until the body rules the mind. As a result both become debased, weak, and eventually useless.

The mind may be developed and strengthened as well as permitted to become weak. For just as the body may be developed by exercise and effort, so may the mind. There are many examples to illustrate this. We mention two.

At the age of twelve Winston Churchill was sent to the famous English school, Harrow. "There," we quote one writer, "he was far and away the worst pupil. In four and a half years he never rose above the bottom of the school. 'That lad couldn't have gone *through* Harrow,' a contemporary remarked. 'He must have gone *under* it.'"

But we all know that Winston Churchill developed one of the greatest minds of this century.

A second, less contemporary, example is that of the religious scholar, Adam Clarke. At school he was regarded as very unpromising. One day an important visitor came to the school. During his visit the teacher pointed to Clarke and said, "That is the stupidest boy in school." Before he left, the visitor placed his hand on the boy's head and said, "Never mind, you may be a great scholar some day. Don't be discouraged but try hard, and keep on trying."

Adam Clarke *did* keep on trying. He *did* become a scholar who produced many important religious books.

Another important law of the mind is that it contracts or expands to conform to the subjects upon which it customarily dwells. If one dwells mostly on small, unimportant matters, in time the mind becomes incapable of encompassing larger subjects. The same law applies if one concentrates on a limited field to the exclusion of others. This was demonstrated by Charles Darwin who, late in life, remarked that his mind had become like some sort of machine for grinding out general scientific laws. It had become incapable of other kinds of thinking.

There is one other law of the mind which we shall mention. If cheap and commonplace thoughts fill the mind, the mind and character will become cheap and commonplace. How tragic it is to see people whose brains have the capacities and capabilities we have suggested, fill them with cheap, useless, even vicious ideas from bad literature and other sources, thus debasing the mind and character. ●