

LETTER

1

Starting points do not determine your end point

Our destiny is determined by our actions, not by our origins.

People who are privileged but have no power are a waste, while those who are educated but uninfluenced are a pile of worthless rubbish.

(Men of privilege without power are waste-material. Men of enlightenment without influence are the poorest kind of rubbish.)

July 20, 1897

Dear John:

You hope that I can sail with you forever, this sounds great, but I am not your eternal captain. God created feet for us to let us walk on our own.

Maybe you are not ready to go alone, but you need to know that the challenging and magical business world that I am in is the starting point of your new life. You will start from there in order to participate in the feast of life that you have never enjoyed before and that relates to your future. As for how you use the knives and forks that are placed in front of you, and how you taste every dish served by the angel of destiny is entirely up to you.

Of course, I expect you to stand out from the crowd in future and outdo me. However, I have decided to keep you by my side, because I want to bring you to a higher starting point in life, so that you can indulge in the rapid opportunities without having to face obstacles.

Of course, there is nothing worth showing off or for you to feel gratified about, and you do not need to be grateful. The founding belief of the United States of America is that all human beings are created equal, but this equality is only present in the context of rights and laws. It has nothing to do with economic and cultural advantages. Think of our world as a high mountain.

When your parents live on the peak of the mountain, you are destined to not live at the foot of the mountain; likewise when your parents live at the foot of the mountain, you are destined to not live on the peak of the mountain. In most cases, the status of parents will determine the starting point of their child's life.

But this does not mean that everyone has a different starting point and life outcomes. In this world, there is never a saying of inheriting wealth or poverty, same goes to inheriting success or failure. The only truth is that as long as you work hard enough, you will succeed. I firmly believe that our destiny is determined by our actions, not by our origins.

As you know, when I was young, my family was very poor. I remember that the books I read when I was in high school were bought by my kind neighbours. In the beginning of my career as a bookkeeper, I was only earning a weekly salary of 5 dollars. But it was only through unrelenting efforts that have enabled me to establish an enviable oil kingdom. In the eyes of others, this may seem to be a legend, but I think it is the reward for my perseverance and hard work from the god of destiny.

John, opportunities will always be unequal, but the results prove otherwise. In history, whether in politics or businesses, (especially in businesses), there has been many examples of successful people who started from scratch. They have had only a few opportunities because of poverty, but they eventually achieved fame because of their past struggles. However, history has also been filled with examples of rich children who were privileged but have failed in life. According to a study that was conducted in Massachusetts on 17 wealthy people, it was revealed that none of their children left the world wealthy.

A long time ago, there was a story in society that satirized the incompetence of rich children. It mentioned that in a small bar in Philadelphia, a guest was talking about a millionaire when he said, "He is a self-made millionaire." "Yeah," a smarter man next to him replied, "He inherited 20 million dollars, but now he is only left with a million."

This is a distressing story but in our society today, the rich children are caught between advancing and retreating. Many of them are destined to be sympathetic and pitiful, and even, go to hell.

The glory and success of the family cannot guarantee the future of its children and grandchildren. I admit that the early advantage is really helpful, but it does not guarantee them a victory in the end. I have thought about this distressing problem for rich children more than once. I feel that once rich children begin taking advantage of their family success, they will have little opportunity to learn and develop the skills needed for survival. People of poorer backgrounds will actively develop their creativity, abilities, while also cherishing and seizing various opportunities because they urgently need to rescue themselves. I have also observed that the kind of ambition of the rich children have, often lacks the motivation and attributes the poor, hence they resort to praying for their own success.

Therefore, when you and your sisters were very young, I deliberately concealed the fact that I was well off. I instilled many values such as frugality and personal struggle in you because I know that the quickest way to harm someone is to give them money. It can make people corrupt, depraved, arrogant, and cause them to lose their source of happiness. I cannot bury my beloved children with wealth, and foolishly make you all into one that is incompetent and only depends on the success of their parents.

A truly happy person is one who is able to enjoy his creation. Those of whom that are like sponges that only takes without giving will only lose happiness.

I believe that there is not one person in the world that does not long for a happy and luxurious life, yet not many people truly understand where it comes from. In my opinion, it does not come from wealthy blood, nor from a luxurious lifestyle, but from a luxurious character – the spirit of self-reliance. Only by looking at noble people who have won the respect of the world and exhibit charisma wherever they go, will we then know the worth of independence.

John, every move of yours will be of concern to me. However, as compared to being concerned, I am more confident in you, and I believe in your excellent character – a character that is more valuable than any wealth in the world, that will help you pave a good future, and lead a successful and fulfilling life

But you need to strengthen the belief that even though the starting point will affect the outcome, it does not determine it. Factors such as ability, attitude, character, ambition, method, experience, and luck play an extremely important role in life and the business world. Your life has just begun, but a battle of life is in front of you. I can deeply feel that you want to be the winner of this war, but you must know that everyone has the will to pursue victory, and only those who are determined and ready will win.

My son, the privileged but powerless people are a waste, while the educated but unaffected people are a pile of worthless garbage. Find your own way and God will help you!

Love,

Your Father

6 LETTER

2

Luck depends on planning

Everyone is a designer and architect of his own destiny.

I do not live by God-given luck, but I do-so by planning luck.

When waiting for luck, you must know how to guide luck; to design luck is to design life.

(He who marches in rank and file has already earned my contempt. He has been given a large brain by mistake, since for him the spinal cord would suffice.)

January 20, 1900

Dear John:

Some people are destined to be dazzling Kings or great men, because of their extraordinary talents, for example, Mr. McCormick, who has a head of luck and knows how to turn a harvester into a sickle for harvesting banknotes.

In my eyes, Old McCormick has always been an ambitious and commercially capable industrial giant. He used harvesting machines to liberate American farmers, and he also rose to the ranks to become one of the richest person in the United States. The French seem to like him

more and praised him to be “the world’s greatest contributor”. Oh, this really is an unexpected reward.

This business genius who was once just an ordinary farm tool merchant once had an esoteric saying which went: “Luck is the remnant of design.”

This phrase does sound quite brainy. Does it mean that luck is the result of planning and strategy? Or does it mean that luck is what remains after planning? My experience tells me that these two meanings exist. In other words, we create our own luck, and no action can eliminate it. Luck is the gospel that is difficult to get rid of in the planning process.

McCormick saw the true meaning of luck and opened his door to it. So, I am not surprised that McCormick harvesters’ product can be sold all over the world.

However, in this world of ours, it is difficult to find people who are good at planning luck like Mr. McCormick, and it is difficult to find people who do not believe in yet understands luck. In the eyes of ordinary people, luck is always innate. As long as they find out someone has attained success or have been promoted, they will say casually, with contempt: “This man’s luck is so good, it is luck that helped him!” Such a person can never have a peek into the truth that makes one successful: everyone is a designer and architect of his own destiny.

I admit, just like a person cannot have no money, a person cannot have no luck. However, if you want to make a difference, you cannot wait for luck to patronize. My credo is: I do not live by God-given luck, but I do-so by planning luck. I believe that a good plan will affect luck, and in any case, it can successfully affect luck. My plan to turn competition into cooperation in the oil industry justified this.

Before the plan began, the oil refiners fought for their own interests, which led to a devastating competition between them. This kind of competition is certainly a boon for consumers, but falling oil prices are a disaster for oil refiners. At that time, the vast majority of refiners were a loss, and were successively sliding into bankruptcy.

I am well aware that if we were to be profitable again and make money forever, we must tame this industry and have everyone act rationally. I regard it as a responsibility, but it is very difficult to do, it requires a plan – a plan that places all the oil refining businesses under my control.

John, to be a good hunter in a profitable hunting ground, you need to think hard, be careful, be able to see all possible dangers and opportunities in things, as well as study all kinds of strategies that could endanger your dominance like a chess player. I thoroughly researched the situation and evaluated my strength. I decided to use the base camp of Cleveland as my first battlefield to launch a war in order to rule the oil industry. After conquering more than 20 competitors there, I moved quickly to open up a second battlefield until I conquered all of their opponents and established an oil industry and a new order.

Just like a commander on the battlefield, you must first know what kind of firearm to choose in order to be the most effective, before choosing your target. In order for me to successfully realize my plan to place the oil industry under my command, a thorough solution is needed. That’s money. I needed a lot of money to buy those refineries that overproduce. But the amount of money on my hands was not enough to realize my plan, so I decided to form a joint stock company to attract investors from outside the industry. Soon we registered a standard oil company in Ohio with millions of assets, and the capital expanded significantly within three and a half years but deciding when to do it is a matter of knowledge.

Visionary businessmen are always good at finding opportunities in every disaster, and that’s how I did it. Before we started our journey of conquest, the oil industry was in chaos and there was no hope at all. Ninety percent of the refiners in Cleveland had been crushed by the increasingly fierce competition. If they did not sell the factory, they can only watch themselves go extinct. This was the best time to acquire an opponent.

It seems unethical to take an acquisition at times like these, but it really has nothing to do with conscience. An enterprise is like a battlefield, and the purpose of strategic goals is to create the most beneficial state for oneself. For strategic considerations, the first target I chose to conquer was not a small company that was vulnerable, but the strongest opponent, Clark & Payne. This company was well-known in Cleveland and were ambitious, as they wanted to

acquire my star oil refinery.

But before the opponent decides, I will have to strike first to gain the upper hand. I took the initiative to meet the largest shareholder of Clark Payne, my old friend in middle school, Mr. Oliver Payne, and I told him that the chaotic and sluggish era of the oil industry should end in order to protect the industry that countless families depend on for survival. I wanted to build a huge, high-performance oil company, and welcomed him to join. My plan impressed Payne, and finally they agreed to sell the company for 400,000 dollars.

I know that Clark Payne is not worth that amount at all, but I did not reject them. Acquiring Clark Payne meant that I would gain the title of the world's largest oil refinery and will also serve as a strong pioneer in the industry to efficiently bring together the refiners in Cleveland. This trick really worked. In less than two months, there were 22 competitors under the leadership of Standard Oil, which eventually made me the big winner of that acquisition battle. This gave me unstoppable momentum. In the following three years, I conquered oil refiners in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Baltimore successively, and became the only master of the oil refining industry in the United States.

Come to think about it, am lucky if I were to only lament on my bad luck at that time and follow the crowd, I might have been conquered. But I planned my luck.

Anything can happen in this world, but nothing can happen without doing anything (reap without sowing). Those who blindly follow the crowd and rules, I view them with disdain. Their brains are entangled with wrong thoughts, as they think that it is worth being complacent just by being able to withdraw themselves.

John, for our good luck to continue, we must carefully plan our luck, and planning luck requires a good plan. A good plan must be a good design, and a good design must be able to play a role. You need to know that when designing a good design, you must first consider two basic prerequisites. The first condition is to know your goals, such as what you want to do, or even what kind of person you want to become; the second condition is knowing what resources you have, such as status, money, interpersonal relationships, and even abilities.

The order of these two basic prerequisites is interchangeable. You may have an idea and/or a goal before you start looking for goals that can be achieved from these resources, or you can also mix them together to form the third and fourth methods, such as having a certain goal and a certain resource. To achieve your goal, you need to selectively choose and create some resources, and also own some resources and a goal, to which afterwards you can adjust your goals accordingly

After adjusting the goal according to the resource or the goal, you have a foundation – you can conceive the design structure, and the rest is up to you to fill it with your means and time, while waiting for luck to come.

You need to remember that my son, designing luck is designing life. So, while you wait for luck, you need to know how to guide your luck. Give it a try.

9Love,

Your Father

¹⁰LETTER

3

Comparing Heaven and Hell

The greatest reward for our hard work is not what we get, but what we will become.

If you view work as a pleasure, life is heaven; if you view work as a duty, life is hell.

(With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope.)

November 9, 1897

Dear John:

There is an allegory that is very meaningful and provided me with a lot of insights.

The fable said:

In ancient Europe, a man found himself in a wonderful place where he could enjoy everything in his afterlife.

As soon as he stepped into the piece of music, someone who looked like a waiter came over and asked him: "Sir, do you have any needs? Here you can have everything you want: delicious food, all possible forms of entertainment

and all kinds of pastimes, amongst them are many beautiful young women where you can enjoy as you please."

After listening to the waiter, the man was a little surprised, but very happy, as he happily thought to himself:

"this is not my dream in the world!" Throughout the day he had been tasting all of the delicious food while enjoying the taste of beauty. However, one day, he was bored, so he said to the waiter: "I am bored from all of this and I need to do something. Can you find me a job to do?"

He did not expect that the answer he received was the waiter shaking his head: "Sorry, my sir, this is the only thing we can't do for you here. There is no work here for you."

The man was very frustrated and waved his hand angrily as he said, "This is really bad! Then I will just stay in hell!"

"Where do you think you're at", said the waiter gently.

John, this very humorous fable tells me that: Losing work means losing happiness. It is regrettable that some people only realize this after being unemployed, which is very unfortunate!

I am proud to say that I have never tasted unemployment. This is not my luck, because I never treat work as hard labour without fun, instead I found infinite happiness from work.

I think that work is a privilege, as it brings more than just sustaining life. Work is the foundation of all businesses, the source of prosperity, and the shaper of genius. Work makes young people work harder and do more than their parents no matter how rich they are. Work is expressed in the humblest forms and lays the foundation for happiness. A job helps to add flavours to life. But people must love work before it can return the biggest favours and achieve the greatest results.

11When I first entered the business world, I often heard that a person who wants to climb to the peak needs to make a lot of sacrifices. However, as the years passed, I began to understand that many people who were climbing to the peak were not "paying the price." They work hard because they really like work. People who climb up in any industry are fully committed to what they are doing and are dedicated. Sincerely love the work you do; you will naturally succeed. Loving work is a belief. With this faith, we can heave the desperate mountain into a rock of hope. A great painter said it well, "Pain will eventually pass, but beauty will last forever." But some people are obviously not smart enough. They have ambitions but are too picky about their work. They are always looking for a "perfect" employer or job. The fact is that employers need punctual, honest, and hard-working employees. They only leaves the salary increase and promotion opportunities to those employees who work hard, are very loyal, extra zealous, and spend more time doing things, because they are running a business, not a charity; they need those who are more valuable.

No matter how great a person's ambitions are, he must at least begin before he can reach the peak. Once started, it is not difficult to progress. The more difficult or unpleasant the work is, the more urgent it is to accomplish it. The longer he waits, the more difficult and scarier it becomes. This is a bit like shooting a gun. The longer you aim, the lower the chance of you pulling the trigger.

I will never forget my first job – the experience of being a bookkeeper. At that time, although I had to go to work every day when the morning just begun, but that never let me lose interest in the job. Instead, it fascinated and delighted me. Even all the red tape in the office did not make me lose my passion for the job. As a result, the employer kept raising my salary. Income is just a by-product of your work. Doing what you should do, accomplishing what you should do well, the ideal salary will come. And more importantly, the highest reward for our hard work is not what we get, but what we will become. Those who are mentally active do not just work hard to earn money; the real reason behind the passion for their work is far more noble– they are engaged in a fascinating career.

Honestly, I am an ambitionist. Since I was a child, I have wanted to be a wealthy man. For me, the Hewitt Tuttle company I worked at is was a good place to exercise my ability and give myself a try in the business. It is a provider of a variety of commodities, owns an iron ore, and operates two technologies which the company heavily relies on to generate profits, namely, railways and telegraphs that revolutionized the American economy. It has brought me into a fun, vast and splendid business world, and taught me to respect numbers and facts. It has also allowed me to see the power of the transportation industry and has cultivated the abilities and qualities that I should have as a businessman. All of these have played a great role in my future business. I can say that without the experience at Hewitt Tuttle, I may have taken many detours in my

career.

Now, whenever I think of Mr. Hewitt & Tuttle, I cannot help but feel grateful in my heart.

That period of time marked the beginning of my career and laid the foundation for my struggles.

I am forever grateful for that three and a half years of experience.

12So, I have never complained about my employer unlike some who might say, "We are nothing but just slaves, we are being suppressed by our employers, but they are standing tall while enjoying themselves in their beautiful villas; their safes are full with gold, and every dollar they have is obtained by exploiting honest workers like us." I don't know if these complainers want to be irregular (minority), but: Who gave you the opportunity to work? Who gave you the chance to build a family? Who gave you the possibility to develop yourself? If you realized they are exploiting you, why don't you end it by leaving for good?

The work bench is a type of attitude; it determines whether we are happy or not. In a group of stone masons who are doing the same job sculpting stone statues, if you were to ask them, "what are you doing here?" One of them might say, "You see, I am chiselling stone, and I can go home after chiselling this piece." This kind of person always treats work as a punishment, and the word he often spits out from his mouth is "tired".

Another person might say: "You see, I am making a statue. This is a very hard job, but the compensation is very high. After all, I have a wife and four children, and they need food and clothing." Regarding work as a burden, a sentence he often spits out from his mouth is "feeding his family".

The third person may put down the hammer and proudly point to the stone carving and say, "You see, I am making a work of art." This kind of person always takes pride in and enjoys his work and often cites: "this job is very meaningful."

Heaven and hell are created by ourselves. If you give meaning to your work, you will feel happy regardless of its size and you will feel fulfilled no matter what self-set results you have attained. If you don't like to do anything, even the simplest things will become difficult and boring. When you lament that this work is very tiring, despite not working hard, you will feel exhausted, in other words there is a huge difference. This is how things are.

John, if you view work as a pleasure, life is heaven; if you view work as a duty, life is hell.

Reflect on your work attitude, it will make everyone happy.

Love,

Your Father

13 LETTER

4

Do it now

Opportunity comes from opportunity.

Bad habits can dictate us and determine success or failure. It is easy to develop, but it is difficult to serve.

Successfully putting a good idea into practice is more valuable than thinking about a thousand good ideas at home.

(To conquer you have need to do, to do again, ever to do! And your safety is insured.)

December 24, 1897

Dear John:

I always clearly remember the words of intelligent people. A wise man said it well,

"Education covers many aspects, but it does not teach you anything." This wise man showed us a truth: if you do not take action, even the world most practical, beautiful, and viable philosophy will not work.

I have always believed that an opportunity comes from another opportunity as even the best ideas have flaws. Even if it is a very ordinary plan, if it is actually implemented and developed, it will be much better than a good plan that is abandoned halfway, because the former will be carried out consistently, but the latter has already been given up. So, I said that there is no secret to success. To achieve positive results in life, it is of course good to have extraordinary wisdom

and special talents. There is nothing wrong with it. As long as you are willing to take active actions, you will be closer to success.

Unfortunately, many people have not remembered this biggest lesson, and as a result they have resulted to mediocrity. If you look at the ordinary people, you will find that they are all living passively, they always say much more than they do, or even do nothing. But almost all of them are good at finding excuses, they will find various excuse to procrastinate until they finally prove that this matter should not be, unable to or it is too late to be done.

Compared to this kind of person, I seem to be much smarter and cunning. Mr. Gates touted me as an active and spontaneous individual. I am happy to hear this because I have lived up to it. Positive action is another positive attribute of mine. I never like to talk in vain. Because I know that there is no result without action, and there is nothing in the world that is obtained just from thinking. As long as people are alive, they must consider taking action.

Many people admit that knowledge without experience is useless, but what is even more frustrating is that even if there is knowledge and wisdom but no action, everything is still empty talk. Action and adequate preparation can actually be seen as two sides of an object. We need to live modestly. Too much preparation but no action at all will only waste time eventually. In other words, everything must be done with limits. We cannot fall into the trap of continuous deliberation and planning but we must recognize the reality: no matter how detailed the plan is, we still cannot accurately predict the final outcome.

Of course, I do not deny that planning is very important. It is the first step to achieving favourable results, but planning is not, and cannot replace action. Just like playing golf, if you have not completed the first hole, you cannot progress to the second hole. Action solves everything. Without action, nothing will happen. We cannot buy fool proof insurance, but what we can do is make up our minds to fulfil our plan.

People who lack action have a bad habit: they like to maintain the status quo and refuse to change. I think this is a bad habit that is deceptive and self-destructive because everything is changing, just as people will live and die, there is nothing constant. But because of one's inner fear – the fear of the unknown, many people resist change. Even if the status quo does not satisfy him, he dares not take a step forward. If you look at the people who should have succeeded in their careers but did not, you know that it's not hard to sympathize with them.

Yes, everyone will be worried and scared when deciding on a huge event and will be faced with a dilemma. But the "action group" will use the determination to ignite the sparks in their soul, come up with various ways to fulfil their wishes, and gain the courage to overcome all kinds of difficulties.

Many people who lack action are naive and like to sit and wait for things to happen naturally. They naively think that others will care about their affairs. In actual fact, other than yourself, others will not be very interested in them. People are only interested in their own things. For example, in a business, the higher our profits, the more we must take the initiative to act, because the success or failure has little to do with others; they will not care. At this time, we'd better push it. If we are lazy, retreating, and waiting for others to take the initiative to kickstart things, the result will be disappointing.

Only by relying on oneself can a person then not let himself down and increase his chance to control his destiny. Smart people will only make things happen.

The most frustrating thing in life is that there are too many things to do, but there is not enough time. As a result, just by thinking about the plans that are unable to be carried out will only intimidate ourselves, and we end up not accomplishing anything. We must admit that with limited time, no one can complete everything. Smart people know that not all actions will produce good results, and only wise actions can bring meaningful results, so smart people will only learn from the work that has a positive effect in the future, and only concentrate on the work related that gives the greatest results. Hence, smart people always make the most valuable contribution and reap a lot of benefits.

To eat an elephant, you need to eat one bite at a time. Same goes to when you are doing something. If you want to accomplish everything at one go, you will only let the opportunity slip away. My motto is: only takes unfair treatment for emergencies.

Many people make themselves into a passive person. They want to wait until all conditions are perfect, that is, when the time is right, before taking action. Life is an opportunity at any time, but there is almost nothing perfect. Those passive people have a mediocre life, precisely because they must wait for everything to be 100% profitable and perfectly safe before doing something. This is a fool's approach. We must compromise in life and believe that what is in hand is the opportunity we need now, so that we can keep ourselves out of the quagmire of waiting forever before falling into action.

We pursue perfection, but there is no absolute perfection in life, only near perfection. If you wait until all conditions are perfect, you can only wait forever, and the opportunity will be given to others. Those who must wait until everything has been prepared will never leave home. To become the kind of person who "will do it now", you must stop daydreaming, and to always think of the present and start doing it now. Sentences such as "tomorrow", "next week", and "future" have the same meaning as "can never be done".

Everyone has a time when they lose confidence and doubts their abilities, especially in adversity. But people who really understand the art of action can overcome it with strong perseverance. They will tell themselves that everyone has failures, and when they fail miserably, they will tell themselves no matter how much preparation they have made and how long they think before they do it, will inevitably make mistakes. However, passive people do not regard failure as an opportunity for learning and growth, as they are always admonishing themselves: perhaps I really can't do it, so that is why I have lost my eagerness to participate in future activities.

Many people want their wishes to come true, but I regard it as a lie. It's a good idea to buy a dozen for a dime. The initial idea is just the beginning of a series of moves, and then comes the second stage of preparation, planning and the third stage of action. There is never a shortage of people with ideas in our world, but there are very few people who know how to successfully implement a good idea, which is more valuable than thinking about a thousand of good ideas at home.

The real basis people use to judge your ability is not how much you have in your head, but your actions. People trust down-to-earth people, and they will think: This person dares to say and do, he must know what the best course of action is. I haven't heard anyone being praised for not disturbing others, not acting, or having to wait for someone else to order things. Those leaders in the business sector, government, and military are very capable and willing people, who are 100% active. Those who stand on the side-lines and do nothing will never be leaders.

Whether it is an automatic spontaneous or a passive person, it is a habit. Habits are like ropes. We spin a rope every day, and finally it is too thick to break. The ropes of habit either lead us to the peak or lead us to the trough, which depends on whether our habits are good or bad. Bad habits can dictate us and determine success or failure. It is easy to develop, but it is difficult to serve. Good habits are difficult to develop, but they are easy to maintain.

¹⁶To have the habit of doing now, the most important thing is to have a proactive spirit, get rid of the habit of being distracted, be determined to be a person of initiatives, be courageous in doing things, don't wait until everything is ready, there will never be absolute perfection. Cultivating the habit of action does not require special wisdom or special skills. You only need to work hard to let good habits bloom in life.

Son, life is a great battle. To win, you need to act, act again, and act forever! In this way, your safety can be guaranteed.

Merry Christmas! I think there is no better Christmas present than this letter to you at this time.

Love,

Your Father