

Chapter 1

Head Winds or Tail Winds

Margot Asquith tells of one day meeting a tramp, with whom she entered into conversation. She was curious to know what was going on in the man's mind.

"How do you decide where you will go next?" she inquired of the wanderer.

"That's easy, " was his answer. "I always turn my back to the wind."

There was, of course, a lot of good sense in the tramp's philosophy. A man's eyes, nose, and mouth are on the front of him. They are sensitive. They hurt when the wind, especially a cold wind, tears into them. The back of his head has a thick growth of hair and fewer nerve endings. It can take the winter's punishment more comfortably.

Coats open in front, so that they flap in a head wind and let the gusts creep around the body, pulling the heat out of it. The skin of the back is less sensitive than the front areas. So a tail wind is far to be preferred. And if the velocity achieves any substantial magnitude, walking into it demands several times as much exertion as walking with it.

All things considered, the tramp had the angles shrewdly figured and was behaving with astounding consistency - fully as much consistency as the drunk man exhibited when he searched for his lost key up at the corner under the street light because there he could see better. The tramp's

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consistency, however, depended upon one distinct feature of his life pattern - he wasn't going anywhere in particular.

Pick yourself out a destination, and sooner or later you will be bucking a head wind. You may be thankful for the occasional tail winds and for the many balmy days when the air moves lazily in no determined direction. But the contrary blasts are bound to blow. If you notice you haven't been bothered lately, you might check up to see whether you have fallen into a weather-vane existence.

Think vigorously for five minutes about life and its problems and you will discover a lot of good valid reasons for turning your back to the wind. You weren't born with brains to spare and can't be expected to achieve the heights reached by more gifted people. Or perhaps you struck an unsympathetic environment where folks misunderstood you and scorned your schemes. You may even have inherited a physical disability that has kept you down. Worst of all, you probably have been pinned down by poverty from childhood. It takes money to go places, and cash has been exceedingly coy in your family.

All in all, you have probably been wise in taking the course of least resistance. Like the tramp, you might just as well turn you back to the blast and go as the wind wills. It doesn't matter much about the direction, anyway. If you agree, don't bother reading the rest of this book, because it might make you uncomfortable.

If, on the other hand, you have picked out a destination, you may find these pages worth perusing for the lift to be gained from the successful lives of men and women who

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never cared how the winds blew. Perhaps you may find inspiration in recalling the struggles of -

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,

Never doubted clouds would break,

Never dreamed, though right were worsted,
wrong would triumph,

Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,

Sleep to wake.

- Browning.