

It Is As You Will

Years ago I ran across a simple little story which contained a world of truth. I would like to share that story with you.

There was an old hermit-philosopher once who lived in the mountains of Virginia. The local high school boys considered the old man a freak and liked to toss fun at him. But the old man, with a wisdom gained from common sense and experienced and tempered by the touch of God, always seemed to prove just a little wiser than his young friends.

AND WHEN HE
WOULD NOT BE
PERSUADED, WE
CEASED AND SAID,
"THE WILL OF THE
LORD BE DONE."
ACTS 21:14

Quite often some of the village boys would tempt the old man with puzzling questions. Rarely did any of the puzzles succeed in embarrassing him. One day one of the boys found a bird that was sick and unable to fly. The boy picked the bird up and kept it till it got well. Shortly thereafter some of the boys were trying to devise a good trick to play on

the old hermit. Suddenly the boy who had the captured bird hit upon a bright idea.

"Listen," he exclaimed to the others in the crowd, "I have a bird in a cage at the house. I will take the bird in my hands and we will go up to visit the old hermit. I will ask him if the bird is dead or alive. If he says that the bird is dead, I will turn it loose and let it fly. But if he says that the bird is alive, I will crush it."

It seemed like a brilliant flash of superior wisdom to the group of boys. Why had they never thought of anything like that before? Why,

it was simply fantastic. Either way the old man answered they had him.

The boy rushed home and took the bird from the cage. Then, as fast as he could run, he hurried back to where the other boys were. Soon the group was formed and together they set out toward the woods where the hermit lived.

As they approached the hermit's hut, most of the boys were giggling and laughing at the trick they were to play on the old man. The thought of making a fool of someone who was different from themselves gave the boys immense pleasure. What a joy it would be to see the hermit embarrassed by a wrong answer.

The hermit was waiting as the boys came up to the hut. He noticed the grins on their faces and prepared himself for something that was supposed to embarrass him.

The boy with the bird in his hands did the talking. "Old man," he said, "you are so wise and we are so dumb. I have a question for you. Tell me, what is this I hold in my hand?" The hermit proceeded slowly with his answer. "Well, my son, it looks like a bird." A cheer went up from the boys as they laughed at the hermit's answer.

"You are right, old man, it is a bird. Now tell me, is this bird dead or alive?" The hermit looked at the bird and then slowly gave a glance at each of the boys in the crowd. Then he looked deep into the eyes of the youth holding the bird and spoke. "It is as you will, my son. It is as you will."

Young graduate, your life is in your hands. Will you crush it or give it wings to fly? It is as you will.