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## Testimonials for Old-Fashioned Truths.\*

### I.

LUKE 13, 24—30.

The sermons of our Savior sparkle with telling parables. As we peruse the record which the evangelists have given of His active ministry, we cannot but be impressed with the fact that they were distinct favorites in His public and private discourses. I call them telling parables because they are striking illustrations to drive home momentous and important truths. Some one has said: "They are earthly stories with a heavenly meaning." Such a parable has been selected to rivet our attention to-day. Under God's gracious guidance let us, then, consider:—

#### *THE CLOSED DOOR.*

- 1. The door is now open.*
- 2. The door will surely be closed.*
- 3. The closed door will find you within or without.*

The Savior had just been asked by one of the audience to whom He had been preaching: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" This man had evidently missed the point which our Lord had made in His sermons. He was asking about a matter which was of no concern to his soul's welfare. Hence Christ gave him an answer which should set him right. He told him: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." That was equivalent to saying: "No man who thinks seriously about his eternal salvation will worry about such a question, but will rather focus his attention upon this one thing that he be saved. To engrave this truth indelibly upon his heart, the Lord tells this parable: The master of a house is anxiously waiting for more and more guests to come to his beautiful mansion. At his hour he will arise and

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## **The Road to Success, or Self-Improvement.**

There are but few men in the world who are self-made, self-acting, self-determined, self-opinioned. An infinite number of slaves and beggars relying and depending on others for support and supply fill all corners of the earth. How many lack self-reliance and courage! How few are able to fill a position satisfactorily!

There is no more pitiful sight than to find a man unable to do the main work which his vocation requires. We expect a lawyer to be an expert in all questions of law, a politician

in civics, a physician in medicine, etc. Especially does this hold true as to the ministers of the Gospel. The main task of the pastor is to work out a good sermon. But are all pastors able to do this? Do you, Mr. Preacher, think, meditate, work out, and prepare your own sermons? Why not? Are you not able to do it? There is no excuse for you. You should be able to do it, holding a position that angels well covet. And if you go at it in the right way, you will be surprised to find how easy it is for you to accomplish that which now to you seems to be so hard, or even impossible.

In the following articles I shall try to help you along in this as well as in a few other things.

### I. WHY SOME FAIL.

Why do men fail? Why do they terminate in a disastrous wreck? The numerous failures who wish always to blame their misfortunes upon others or upon external circumstances find small comfort in statistics. What are the chief causes of failure in life? Let us enumerate them. The causes as compiled by those who have investigated the subject are as follows:—

Bad habits; bad judgment; carelessness of details; dishonest dealings; drifting with the tide; drinking; excessive smoking; extravagance; failure to appreciate one's surroundings; failure to grasp one's opportunities; fooling away time; inattention; incompetency; indolence; lack of adaptation; of business methods; of conservatism; of close attention to one's vocation; of holy ambition; of confidence and trust in God; of faithfulness; of careful accounting; of careful observation; of definite purpose; of discipline in life; of manly character; of enterprise; of pluck; of energy; of industry; of faith in one's calling; of integrity; of judgment; of knowledge; of natural ability; of perseverance; of pure principles; of proper courtesy toward people; of promptness; of system; late hours; living beyond one's income; no love for one's calling; procrastination; selfishness; self-indulgence in small vices; studying ease rather than vigilance; thoughtless marriages; undesirable

location; unwillingness to pay the price of success; unwillingness to bear privations; waste; yielding too easily to discouragement.

Surely, here is material enough for a hundred sermons if one cared to preach them. Here are causes that have made many lose their bearings, and they are now drifting about in search of an anchorage.

There are so many elements that interfere with success. Health, natural aptitude, temperament, disposition, a right start in the right place, hereditary traits, good judgment, common sense, level-headedness, etc., are all factors which enter into one's chance of success in life. We cannot go into much detail. We can only hang out the red flag over some of the dangerous places whercon many have been wrecked.

People who do not get on, and who do not know why, do not realize the power of trifles to mar a career, what little things are killing their success or injuring their vocation. They do not realize how little things harm them, such as the lack of promptness or poor preparation.

Men often fail because they do not realize that creeping paralysis, caused by dry rot, is gradually strangling their work. Many fail because they do not look conditions in the face when things go wrong, and do not adopt right and heroic methods, but continue to use palliatives, until the conditions are beyond cure. You must pull down the nests if the rooks should fly away.

The lack of courage and lack of faith in one's mission in life have caused not a few failures.

Others fail because they did not keep up with the times; they fail to get ahead, and they plod along in mediocrity. They are round pegs in square holes. Others are not capable of coping with antagonism. They are surly, unaccommodating. They do not know how to handle men. Inability to get along with others, slave-driving methods, defective organizing ability, lack of system, have cut short many a career. If they would establish their position, it is incumbent upon them to dispose of these faults.

A great many men are ruined by side-lines, things outside their regular vocation. Such men seldom, if ever, succeed. Success depends upon efficiency, and efficiency is impossible without intense, persistent concentration. It is always the small man, never the big one, who has a side-line. Many of these men remain small, and are never able to rise to a high position because they split up their endeavor, dissipate their energy. Their side-line, in which they take an extravagant interest, ruins them. Side-lines are dangerous because they divert the mind, scatter effort, and nothing great can thus be accomplished. This error is committed very often.

Many people are always driving success away from them by their rough, antagonistic manner and their pessimistic thought. By this they color the destiny of their whole career. They do not realize that they kill their prospects by their adverse mental attitude.

A goodly number of people fail because they lose their courage. It seems to them that they are brought face to face with questions which they can neither solve nor elude. Whichever horn of the dilemma they take hold of, they are sure to be gored by it. And when they get down, they do not know how to get up. Many are victims of their moods, slaves of despondency. They are always filled with doubts and fears. Courage and an optimistic outlook upon life are imperative to the winner. They go far toward remedying those ills. But fear is fatal to success. Fear only multiplies our cares, makes our burdens many times heavier, and often is the mother of despair.

Many men fail because their minds are not trained; they are not self-reliant, always depending on books and help and other people's judgment and advice. They let other people do their thinking. They are not able to think and meditate for themselves. What a shame if a business-man cannot stand on his own feet! What a disgrace if the pastor of a congregation is not qualified with sufficient ability to produce a good sermon of his own! He certainly is a failure in his vocation because he lacks efficiency in his principal work. Many a man runs

his head against a pulpit who should have followed some other line. It is perfectly true that ministers fail like other men, from incapacity, dulness, laziness, half-heartedness, — from all the causes that cripple men's intellects, and paralyze men's energies. So long as parents continue to think that weak, sickly boys, who are unable to succeed in other vocations, will do for the ministry, the pulpit will continue to have its incapables. Others fail because of the disregard, almost contempt, of manner in speaking. They are not flames, but icicles; they preach to the head, not to the heart; they argue coldly. Who can wonder, when religious truth is offered in this dry, phlegmatic manner, when the preacher reads his sermons, that these are so destitute of living energy, and fail to alarm the profligate, or to animate the desponding? The preacher may be armed with the best theological weapons, yet fail to win success from lack of skill in using them.

Thousands fail because they never fall in love with their work. Work that is drudgery never succeeds; it falls flat, utterly flat; and it is flat and unattractive. When the spirit of love and enthusiasm goes out of our work, it leaves nothing but the corpse of failure.

Every success-quality can be turned to one's disadvantage through wrong use. No matter how broad and strong the dike may be, if a little hole lets the water through, ruin and disaster are sure. Possession of almost all the success-qualities may be absolutely nullified by one or two faults.

No one can hope to succeed who is timid, who lacks spirit, resolution, and bravery, who has not the courage of his convictions, who always seeks for certainty before he ventures, who remains a sponge his lifetime, and always hides in a corner. Self-distrust, fear, and cowardice is the cause of most of our failures. In the assurance of strength there is strength, and they are the weakest, however strong, who doubt their own strength, power, and ability. They are always afraid to venture a thing, and thus they remain to be sponges. Be a contributor rather than a sponge. Become bold and gallant. The ruin

which overtakes so many is due, not so much to their lack of talent as to their lack of "nerve." How many lovable persons we see, endowed with brilliant capacities, but cursed with yielding dispositions, filled with fright and timidity, — who are resolute in no undertakings and fixed in no principles! Are you one of these?

These are clouds without water. They seem as if they were the homes of refreshing showers, and as if they would open their treasures in gentle bountifulness; but never a drop comes from their showy parade! They have only the appearance of reviving ministries; the thirsty land remains parched, and her fertility is checked. Those men are like these rainless clouds. They seem to be real, but they carry no vital wealth. They move about in the world, delusive presences, bearing the promise of refreshing, and yet only mocking us, like a mirage on the desert waste. They are failures. They are like empty cisterns and not like inexhaustible wells. Ps. 37, 39: "But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; He is their Strength in the time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them."

Be Thou at my right hand,  
Then I can never fail;  
Uphold Thou me, and I shall stand,  
Fight, and I must prevail.

## II. BEGIN TO IMPROVE NOW; DO NOT WAIT FOR GOLDEN OPPORTUNITIES.

Begin now. There is no moment like the present. "Are you in earnest? Seize this very minute; what you can do, or dream you can, begin it." Make hay while the sun shines. Putting off usually means leaving off. Do not wait for special opportunities to come. Begin to improve now. First of all, be prompt. Promptness takes the drudgery out of an occupation. Promptness is the mother of public favor and gives credit.

The prompt man, the decided man, does not wait for favorable circumstances; he does not submit to events; events must

submit to him. The vacillating man is ever at the mercy of the opinion of the man who talked with him last.

Do not expect too much from books. The use of books must be found outside their own lids. The culture of books often is gained at the cost of vigor and rugged strength. The bookworm has lost the power to grapple with men and things.

Do not wait for extraordinary opportunities. Seize common occasions, and make them great. This is a point which inevitably presents itself, and which it is well to note at the outset. "Who waits to have his task marked out shall die and leave his errand unfulfilled." (Lowell.) Weak men wait for opportunities, strong men make them. Whatever people may think of you, do that which you believe to be right. Be alike indifferent to censure or praise.

Each moment brings us to the threshold of some new opportunity. "We look too high for things close by." Many who think they are poor are rich in opportunities. It is a sorry day for a man who cannot see any opportunities where he is, but thinks he can do better somewhere else. Every minute of your life, every new day, every new year is a golden opportunity. Every new acquaintance, every conversation, every sermon is an opportunity. Golden opportunities are nothing to laziness, but industry makes the commonest chances golden. Do not wait for your opportunity. Make it.

And then exploit that opportunity, utilize it, make the best of it, though it were but the commonest thing in the world. But do not postpone it. Begin at once. Be not afraid to commence. I am reiterating this in the most emphatic manner.

Many a man has accomplished nothing of worth to himself or the world simply because he did not dare to commence things. We therefore have no alternative but this: Begin! Begin!! *Begin!!!* Do it now. Do not hesitate. Do not wait any longer.

Meanwhile the mighty debt runs on,  
The dread account proceeds,  
And your not doing is set down  
Among your darkest deeds.



### .III. YOU DO NOT NEED TREMENDOUS GIFTS.

Do you doubt your final success because of your inferior qualities? Many think that they cannot succeed because they have not extraordinary gifts. But they think so without any reason. Their skepticism is unwarranted. They labor under an initial misconception. It is one of those many false conceptions which have obtained currency, and, having once become current, are so difficult to banish from circulation. They think that it takes especial genius to become successful in one's work. This, however, is a great error.

No one should be disappointed because he was not endowed with tremendous gifts in the cradle. The truth is you do not need especial gifts, genius, and talent to become successful; you need only the common every-day qualities. Only the humble virtues — diligence, patience, and endurance — are necessary to accomplish great things, to be successful in your vocation. Do the best you can wherever your lot be cast. Success lies in acting well your part, and this every one can do.

No one need doubt that the world has use for him. Nature never lets a man rest until he has found his place. Better be a first-rate hod-carrier than a second-rate anything. "Whatever you are by nature, keep to it; never desert your line of talent. Be what nature intended you for, and you will succeed." No man can be ideally successful until he has found his place.

Every person has a special adaptation for his own peculiar part in life. Wellington was considered a dunce by his mother. Sir Walter Scott was called a blockhead by his teacher. Cromwell was a farmer until forty years old. These men had not yet found their right place in life. They were as yet round pegs in square holes. But how successful they became when they found their places! Then they had found their real calling. This is admirably illustrated in a passage from Franklin, saying: "He that hath a calling hath a place of profit and honor. A plowman on his legs is higher than a gentleman on his knees."

Be a whole man at everything, a whole man at study, in work, and in play. Think less of yourself and more of others.

Mingle freely with people. Book-knowledge is valuable, but the knowledge which comes from mind intercourse is invaluable.

The habit of precision and accuracy strengthens the mentality, improves the whole character, and forwards our success.

One would fain believe that, if success does not depend on our especial gifts, it must be the ripe fruit of good luck. Happily this belief cannot be indulged in conformity with the facts. What is called good luck is generally the prerogative of valiant souls. It is the final effort that brings victory. Most of the great things in the world have been accomplished by grit and pluck. The race is not always to the swift,—they stumble that run fast. The battle is not always to the strong. There are innumerable golden opportunities open to him who will try. In most cases it is not lack of ability that holds men down, but lack of industry. If we admit this, we virtually abandon the Broadway of slovenliness and start on the narrow path that leads to success. For industry, coupled with God's blessing, is sure to achieve a perfectly satisfying success; yea, such God-blessed industry is the mother of true success.

Do not feel sorry that you are not as brilliantly gifted as some others are. "There are diversities of gifts," 1 Cor. 12, 4. Some have extraordinary gifts, others not. You do not need extraordinary gifts to succeed. Only use the common qualities that you can call your own faithfully and diligently.

The greatest men will ever be those who have risen from the ranks. Napoleon, after much hard toil and drudgery and years of patient waiting, at last was placed at the head of the best troops Europe ever saw. Cromwell made his own army; he never saw an army till he was forty; before that he had worked on a farm. Lincoln, who united a nation, in his youth split rails on his father's farm. It is said that there are ten thousand chances to one that genius, talent, and virtue shall issue from a farmhouse rather than from a palace. "The best men always make themselves" (Patrick Henry). True, God governs all things, and everything depends on His divine blessing, but He wants us to use our common faculties diligently.

The power which inheres in a trained faculty of observation is priceless. Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think; but thousands can think for one who can see.

A person who strenuously uses his natural, God-given faculties can command innumerable resources, and to him golden opportunities are plentiful. Another with equally good gifts, who, however, does not utilize them, will fall short. From the same material one man builds a palace and another a hovel. Note the difference and — ponder the lesson.

Many of us consider our natural gifts poor, mean, and inadequate as compared with those of others; but if we are willing to work on and up, we can, under God's bountiful blessing, by patience and persistence, raise the value of our raw material to almost fabulous heights. Every man has great opportunities and may become almost anything if he is willing to labor.

First of all, you must be willing. Learn to will decisively and strongly. It is not talent or genius that men lack, it is the will to labor; it is the purpose to succeed even under the greatest hardships. Diligence and endurance are the factors which accomplish great things in the world. "In idle wishes fools supinely stay: Be there a will, and wisdom finds a way." It is astonishing what men who have come to their senses late in life have accomplished by a sudden resolution and a strong will. The achievements of will-power are simply beyond computation. Scarcely anything seems impossible to the man who can will strong enough and long enough.

History is full of examples of men who have redeemed themselves by the firm resolution of an iron will. The consciousness of being looked upon as inferior, as incapable of accomplishing what others accomplish; the sensitiveness at being considered a dunce, has stung many a man into a determination which has elevated him far above those who laughed at him.

The persistent thought that you are not as good as others, that you are a weak, ineffective being, will lower your whole standard of life and paralyze your ability. Many people make

a very poor showing because there is no "pep," no vim and vigor, in their efforts. Their resolutions are spineless; there is no backbone in their endeavor—no grit in their ambition. "Only be thou strong and very courageous," were the words of the Lord to Joshua. One reason why so many of us are so pinched and narrow is because we do not have enough courage in ourselves, and we fear to undertake things. We are held back by too much caution. We are timid about venturing. We are not bold enough. Fearlessness can make a one-talent man a success, while a ten-talent man without it would fail.

What miracles intrepidity has wrought! What seemingly impossible deeds it has helped to perform! If we brood too much over our inferiority, we thereby put it into ourselves. We think ourselves into smallness. We must get rid of this by remembering that we have a great task to perform in this life; we owe something to the world in which we live. We are indebted to the world both for what it has done for us, and what we can do for the world. We must pay our debt to the world. A debt is something owed. Our word "ought" comes from the word "owe." "We ought" means, "we owe it." Don't think yourself too small to do something for the world. You owe it, you can do it. When we think this through to a conclusion, we confront one of life's greatest duties. It is our duty; and "the path of duty is the way to glory."

We are hampered by our timidity. We are handicapped by our foolish convictions of inefficiency. There is no man in the whole world that can help us do a thing when we think we cannot do it. Pluck and a strong resolution must lead the way. This courage on our part has its foundation in a benevolent, omnipotent Helper, the powerful Maker of the universe. We can say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." We have the divine promise: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." It is doubt and fear, timidity and cowardice, that hold us down and keep us in mediocrity, doing petty things when we are capable of sublime deeds.

Habit is a principle of human nature, which we must use to increase the efficiency and ease of our work in life. If a man does a thing once, it is easier the second time, and at length it will be done without effort. We are apt to overlook the physical basis of habit. Every repetition of an act makes us more likely to perform that act, and discovers in our wonderful mechanism a tendency to perpetual repetition, whose facility increases in exact proportion to the repetition. Finally the original act becomes voluntary from a natural reaction.

At any rate, get rid of the idea that you cannot be successful without tremendous gifts. Be sure that with the help of God you will be successful if you use your common qualities as best you can. Do not shirk the drudgery of little things in daily life; perform them faithfully.

A quiet lot in life is mine,  
Made up of little things;  
Teach me to do as unto Thee  
The duties each day brings.  
Faithful in that which is the least,  
Dear Master, I would be;  
That makes successful daily work—  
A thing that pleaseth Thee.

#### IV. MAKE ECONOMICAL USE OF WHAT YOU HAVE.

Couple your best with the things in your reach. The best countenances the old painters have bequeathed to us are those of cherished objects near them. The face of Raphael's mother blends with the angelic beauty of all his Madonnas. Titian's daughter and the wife of Correggio again and again meet in their works. Utilize well what you have. Couple your best with your sincerity. Do what you can. Angels can do no more.

Christian service is not a matter of dimension. It is fidelity to the duty next at hand. It is being faithful in little things. Remember the supreme importance of little things. "They are but little at the first, but mighty at the last." First a little seed, but it takes root, sprouts up, and grows into a tree. All the great things in the world had an insignificant beginning;

they were at first very little things. And these are the things that we can do, but every day neglect.

Do not wait for a higher position or a larger salary. Rather enlarge the position you already occupy; put originality of method into it; fill it as it never was filled before. Practise what you know, and you shall attain to higher knowledge. If you are not faithful in doing the little things, how can you expect to be entrusted with great things? No gain is more certain than that which proceeds from the economical use of what we have. All must be worked up into power. Never be loath to learn new things. "Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice; take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment." (*Hamlet.*)

Economy is wealth. A little practical education that has become a part of one's being and is always available, will accomplish more than knowledge far more extensive that cannot be utilized. A pebble in the sling of a David who knows how to send it to the mark is more effective than a Goliath's ponderous weapon which he cannot use to any advantage. Make, therefore, an economical use of the little knowledge you possess. Exercise thrift, the most valued of all habits. Thrift is the great fortune-maker.

The word thrift in its origin means the grasping or holding fast the things that we have. Thrift is care and prudence in the management of one's resources. It implies economy, carefulness, as opposed to waste and extravagance. It involves self-denial and frugal living for the time being, until the prosperity which grows out of thrift permits the more liberal indulgence.

Thrift is measured not by the pound, but by the penny; not by the dollar, but by the cent. Do not cast the cent aside as insignificant. Rightly viewed, not even the meanest object is insignificant; all objects are as windows through which the wise man looks into final success itself. Despise not the rag from which man makes paper, or the litter from which the earth makes corn. Nothing hitherto was ever stranded, cast aside;

all, and were it only a withered leaf, works together with all. One day, when in London, an English manufacturer came across a heap of silk waste. He bought it at a half-penny a pound, and was laughed at. But then came the startling announcement that he had produced a machine which at small cost turned the waste rubbish into beautiful fabrics.

Save the little things. Saving is the first great principle of success. It creates independence, it fills a man with vigor, it stimulates him with proper energy, it brings to him happiness and contentment.

Practise and promote the thrift-habit. Thrift is the very foundation of individual efficiency, and individual efficiency is the foundation of success. Shun all selfish pleasures and indulgences which not only drain the purse, but sap the physical strength and undermine the health of brain and body. The majority do not even try to practise self-control; they are not willing to sacrifice present enjoyment, ease, for larger future good. They spend their health at the time for transient gratification, for the pleasure of the moment, with little thought for to-morrow, and then they envy others who are so well and brilliant. They store up neither money, health, and strength, nor knowledge and brain-power for the future.

The squirrels know that it will not always be summer. They store food for the winter, which their instinct tells them is coming; but multitudes of human beings store nothing, consume everything as they go along, so that when sickness and old age come, there is no reserve, nothing to fall back upon. Washington, the founder of our nation, gave voice to rules for personal and national success in the following words: "Economy makes happy homes and sound nations. Instil it deep." And again: "I cannot enjoin too strongly upon you a due observance of economy and frugality."

By the habit of thrift you will gain self-control, better health, self-respect, a truer manhood, a more permanent contentment and satisfaction. There is an impressive fact in the

Gospel-story of the Prodigal Son. The statement: "He wasted his substance in riotous living," means more than: he wasted his funds. It implies that he wasted himself. Thrift is not only one of the foundation-stones of a fortune, but also one of character. The habit of thrift improves the quality of the character. The economical use of what we have usually means the saving of a man—money, health, brains, memory, manhood, self-respect, happiness. It means cutting off indulgences or avoiding vicious habits which are ruinous. It often means health in the place of dissipation. It often means a clear instead of a cloudy and muddled brain.

Furthermore, the saving habit, the exercise of your mental faculties, the economical use of what you know, indicates an ambition to get on and up in the world. It develops a spirit of independence, of self-reliance. It is an indication of many sterling qualities. It certainly is a factor in self-improvement, and helps you along on the road to success.

Make it a rule never to despair even if you feel your own strength fail. God has in store for us yet more and richer resources. Pray to Him: O Lord, Thou dost assign to each man his duties according to his ability, and dost want us to eat our bread in the sweat of our brow. Behold, on Thy word I have cast out the net of my calling, as we are to live of honest labor. May my toil and labor not be lost, but grant that, "working with my hands," I may succeed. May Thy blessing—on which all depends—ever attend my efforts, I bringing them to a successful issue without impairing the interests of others. Let me make economical use of what I have. Cause Thy blessing to increase as time goes on; bless our "basket and our store." O Lord, make my heart glad and my face joyful; give me health, life, and success.

When earth can comfort us no more,  
Nor human help availeth,  
The Maker comes Himself, whose store  
Of blessing never faileth.



## V. BE DETERMINED, AND SURMOUNT ALL DIFFICULTIES.

The world makes way for the determined man. Prompt decision and whole-souled action sweep the world before them. The world in its very heart admires the stern, determined doer. It calls out to him:

There's a brave fellow! There's a man of pluck!  
A man who's not afraid to say his say,  
Though a whole town's against him. — *Longfellow.*

The truest wisdom is a resolute determination. Let him first be a man. Manhood is greater than any career. In the great race of life common sense has the right of way.

You have your own special place and work in life. Find it, fill it. It may seem very low and common, but it may be a stepping-stone to something higher.

'Tis a common proof  
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder. — *Shakespeare.*

You can succeed like others. What has been done can be done again. Take arms against a sea of troubles. Never give up, let come what may; stick to your aim. It is this keeping right on that wins in the battle of life. When we have conquered our misfortunes, they become our helpers. Oh, the glory of an unconquerable will! "Nothing harder if one knows not how to will it; nothing easier, if one wills it." (Alexander Dumas.)

Nothing else is more fascinating than the romance of achievement under difficulties which encumber. It is not every calamity that is a curse, and adversity is often a blessing. "Sweet are the uses of adversity." Surmounted difficulties not only teach, but hearten us in our future struggles. Adversity is the prosperity of the great.

No matter how threatening things may appear, never despair; never imagine that all is beyond help; believe firmly that God is nearest when the need is greatest. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart." Ps. 27, 14. Prosperity and adversity, joy and sorrow, have their seasons. God has ordered all things. Do not oppose His holy will. Do not delve into His mystery and manner, but say:

"Thy will be done." Keep up courage under all circumstances; be determined, and surmount all difficulties. "This also cometh from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Is. 28, 29.

It is the north wind that lashes men into Vikings. Storms make trees more hardy. "A cold May and a windy makes the barn fat and findy." Many men owe the grandeur of their lives to their tremendous difficulties. These call out great qualities, and make greatness possible. Trials unlock our virtues; defeat is the threshold of our victory. Men of mettle turn disappointments into helps as the oyster turns into pearl the sand which annoys it. Small men under difficulties cry out in despair and say, "We are lost." Great men are determined to overcome the difficulties and say, "Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me." Ps. 138, 7. "Be strong and of good courage; fear not, nor be afraid of them." Deut. 31, 6. Little minds are tamed and subdued by misfortunes; but great minds rise above them. They bid defiance to all difficulties.

There is no more helpful and profiting exercise than surmounting obstacles. When God wants to educate a man, He does not send him to school to the Graces, but to the Necessities. The best tools receive their temper from fire, their edge from grinding. Through the pit and the dungeon Joseph came to a throne. In the necessity for exertion we find the chief source of human advancement. Kossuth called himself "a tempest-tossed soul, whose eyes have been sharpened by affliction." God knows where the richest melodies of our lives are, and what drill and what discipline are necessary to bring them out.

We do our best while fighting desperately to attain what the heart desires. The most beautiful as well as the strongest woods are found not in tropical, but in severe climates, where they have to fight the frosts and the winter's cold. Though you try hard, but often fail, never give up. Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall. After much discontent and vacillation we become wary, wise, prompt,

and content. The efficient man is always growing. He draws from adversity the elements of greatness. Misfortune is a stepping-stone for genius, a treasure for the skilful man.

We must "be strong and of a good courage." Josh. 1, 6. We must realize our adaptability to great ends; we must resolve to struggle, to endure trials and tests, to pay the necessary price, confident that the result will pay us well for all our efforts. We must be ready to overcome many difficulties on the road to success. A man upon whom continuous sunshine falls is like the earth in August: he becomes parched and dry, and hard and close-grained.

Difficulties and obstacles are a stumbling-block and an abyss only for the feeble. It is only the weak and undecided who halt before them. The strong man, the man with an iron will, the man with a decided determination that nothing shall check his career, is sure, if he has perseverance and grit, to succeed with the help of God. You cannot defeat the determined mind, the mind with a consecrated aim, a good conscience, and an undaunted confidence in God's power and willingness to help. Such a firm and decisive spirit is invincible. When he is recognized, it is curious to see how the space clears around him and leaves him room and freedom. There is no insuperable difficulty to him who has God for his sword and buckler in the battle of life.

The boulder which was an obstacle in the path of the weak becomes a stepping-stone in the pathway of the resolute. The difficulties which dishearten one man only stiffen the sinews of another, who looks on them as a sort of mental spring-board by which to vault across the gulf of failure to the sure, solid ground of full success.

A fruit-grower was making the rounds of the California nurseries looking for twenty thousand young prune-trees to be ready for planting in ten months. Not a nursery would undertake so impossible a task. But when Luther Burbank heard of this man, he sought him and took the contract to furnish the trees. He planted almonds because they were of hurried growth,

and when they sprouted, he secured from the surrounding orchards prune-buds. These were budded into the almond-trees, which now became prune-trees. In a little over half of the ten months' limit Burbank had delivered these prune-trees ready for planting. That was the beginning of his fortune and his fame.

The world always stands aside for the determined man. Napoleon had applied for every vacant position for seven years before he was recognized, but meanwhile he studied with all his might. That English manufacturer for nearly ten years put all the profit from his mills into experimental machinery for the utilization of silk waste rubbish; but to-day from all parts of the world waste silk pours into his great Manningham mills to come forth worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. You will find no royal road to your triumph. One of the commonest of common virtues is perseverance, yet it has been the opening sesame of more fast-locked doors of opportunity than have brilliant tributes. Difficulties will sink before it, where they had appeared mountain high. The romance of perseverance under especial difficulties is one of the most fascinating subjects in history.

Do you labor under the difficulty of physical weakness, disease, and suffering? You may succeed in spite of all that. The history of human triumphs over difficulties shows that the weak, the sick, the suffering, the deformed, have often outrun the strong and hale to the goal of success, in spite of tremendous physical handicaps. Many such instances might be cited. You have more and better chances than they could ever dream of. Overcome your much smaller difficulties, and determine to improve and be successful. In passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well. Have an undying courage and confidence. Say with a trustful heart:

Whate'er my God ordains is good.	And take content
He never will deceive me;	What He hath sent;
He leads me by the proper path,	His hand that sends my sadness
I know He will not leave me,	Will turn my tears to gladness.

## VI. SHUN SELF-INDULGENCE, DISSIPATION, AND WASTE OF ENERGY.

For all who seek self-improvement "there is a lion in the way," the lion of self-indulgence, and it is only by the conquest of this enemy that progress is assured. Never connive at your faults and extravagances, however little they may appear; you must shun them, conquer them. Some cry out against sin, even as the mother cries out against her child, when she calls it slut and naughty girl, and then falls to hugging and kissing it.

Beware of little extravagances; a small leak will sink a big ship. Some little weakness, some self-indulgence, want of decision, lack of persistence, shirking from duty, have wrecked many a career. Sweet and seemingly innocent delights often have bitter and violent ends.

He is a wise man who wastes no energy on pursuits for which he is not fitted. The dissipation of strength or hope is fatal to prosperity even in the most attractive field. The great evil in life is dissipation. Washington, the father of our country, once gave out the warning: "Promote frugality and industry, and *avoid dissipation.*" If we would become successful and remain a great and happy nation, it is necessary to avoid dissipation. If we indulge in this evil and drain the cup of life's pleasures to the dregs, we must not complain if we find those dregs bitter enough. And it makes no difference whether our dissipations are coarse or fine—they keep us from success; they hold us down in ignominious vassalage.

Everything is good which takes away one plaything and delusion more, and sends us home to add one stroke of faithful work. Rivet every faculty upon one unwavering aim. Do not let the thorns which appear in every vocation, or temporary despondency, or disappointment, shake your purpose. Definiteness of aim is characteristic of all true art. "Not many things, but much," is a good motto. The man who scatters himself upon many objects soon loses his energy, and with his energy his enthusiasm.

The man who is forever looking about to see what he can

find never finds anything. The decided man, the punctual man, can do twice as much as the undecided and dawdling man who never quite knows what he wants. If we look for nothing in particular, we find just that and no more. Your motto must be, "Act now! Do it instantly!" This is the only way to check the propensity to dawdling.

The world is full of theoretical, one-sided, impractical men. Most of their faculties have atrophied and died. The college graduate often mistakes his crutches for strength. He inhabits an ideal realm where common sense rarely dwells. The world cares little for his theories or his encyclopaedic knowledge. A writer called the Frenchman La Harpe an oven which was always heating, but which never cooked anything. The world has no use for theoretical, impractical men who waste their energy on much knowledge which they are not able to utilize. "No great deed is done by falterers who ask for certainty" (George Eliot). What good are powers, faculties, unless we can use them? What good would a chest of tools do a carpenter unless he could use them? A college education, a head full of knowledge, are worth little to the men who cannot use them to some definite end.

The great lack of the age is want of thoroughness. How seldom do you find a man who is willing to take time to prepare for his life work! A little education is all they want, a little smattering of books, and then they are ready for business, for their life vocation. Everybody is in a hurry. People are not willing to lay broad, deep foundations.

Many a man fails to become a great man by splitting into several small ones, choosing to be a tolerable Jack-of-all-trades, rather than to be an unrivaled specialist. Men often fancy themselves strongest in those departments of intellectual effort where they are the weakest, and waste precious hours upon some art in which they are doomed to lasting mediocrity. Who will deny that a vast amount of talent in society thus runs to waste?

O Lord, let me shun self-indulgence, dissipation, and waste of energy. Thy strength is made perfect in weakness. Thou

doest great deeds that cannot be fathomed, and miracles that cannot be counted. I call upon Thee, O Most High, to give success to my efforts. Provide me with strength from on high, and give me of the wisdom that is perpetually about Thy throne, that it may be with me and assist me in my work. And since all depends on Thy divine blessing, I now pray Thee, O my God, remember me in Thy rich mercy and bless all I do, that I may begin all my undertakings prudently and bring them to a happy issue.

In every enterprise,  
Lord, counsel me, advise;  
Speed all my work; in favor  
And blessing crown my labor.

Morris, Minn.

F. E. PASCHE.

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