

Incentives to Literary Achievement

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Few things are more difficult to attain and few things give fuller satisfaction than success in literature. The artist may sit before his canvas for years with the most earnest application and in the end be able to produce a fascinating array of colors in combination, but sometime he will arrive at the point where the combinations end and his skill will have reached its zenith. The actor will practice and perform for weeks and months and as a result become proficient even to popularity, but there is a place where suppleness of muscle and grace of manner no longer improve and the actor has reached his highest plane. But the man who craves wisdom and longs to draw to his fill from the universe of knowledge about him, finds all things different. He may become proficient in one branch of learning but immediately another field is open to him, and so step by step his mind grows on all sides until he becomes a balanced, educated man.

Truly the artist, the actor and the sculptor are men the world would be at loss to

post with for their influence on culture is unmeasurable. But each is a rock with one side polished, a coronet with one gem inlaid; they have sculptured away the undeveloped portion of their minds to leave a monument of their pet profession.

How noble then the ambition of one who aspires to literary proficiency. Don't resist him when he looses the plow handle, when he drops the sculptors tool and tosses aside the artists brush, for he does so to enter the grandest field the world offers, the field of thought and the world of ideas. Loose him to the free exercise of his will and if he possess determination, each step up the steps where Bacon and Swift and Pascal have climbed sends fresh blood through his veins, and his vigor increases as higher and purer air is reached. While the pretender with his mushroom growth of ambition wilts at the first real obstacle, he imbibes the incomparable skill of Shakespeare and knows wherein his genius lies, he muses on the power of Locke and Bentham, and Shelley and breathes the spirit that hovered round them when they wrote.

But these are the flights, not the quiet

walks of aspiration. The transports of inspiration that reached and sometimes almost startled the old writers, are enjoyed by only the few. The thrilling sweeps of power and electric fire the poet and orator have so utterly failed to describe to us, but which speaks to us from every burning word that leaves their tongue or pen, is a golden gift nature does not choose to fling to every idle chatterer. Work is the only condition on which literary eminence may be gained, be the mind talented or untalented, faithful, unlagging, evolving work, evolving from the vacillating effort of youth into the power and zeal of manhood, guided by a strong and single purpose.

The young man usually considers his energy sufficient to drive him steadily forward in improving his mind and the work required in learning, without resort to force of will but soon or late he finds himself lagging and discovers that weeks may be necessary in which to recuperate and move onward. More force is required to drive the immaterial, invisible will than the whole

physical mechanism of the body. So long as the will governs the complete system of nerves, its power is supreme, but whence the source of power that bids the world govern itself? These forces and compulsions invariably present themselves to the young man and he eventually learns that the dignity of manhood and the force and depth of a trusty character are the surest qualities that lead to steady work and once settled in this feeling of confidence, an element of surety enters a man's work that constitutes a great incentive in literary achievement.

The fondest hope or greatest desire one entertains is to lead and influence his fellow men, to be a commander, to elicit respect and receive honor. Is there any place where more leaders of men may be found than among authors and orators? Is there any vocation which has been entitled to or received more respect? Is there any class of individuals in all history from the first simple customs of men down to the present age of colossal governments, that has received more honor?

The first rays of literary aspiration
 seem born of a taste for culture and learning.
 The young student receives his first impulse,
 his first incentive to attainment, in thought
 and expression of it, from an inborn love of
 wisdom. His mind almost unconsciously
 develops in the direction of its ray, and
 as more mature age arrives he finds his
 mind becoming stronger and his abilities
 more robust. He puts himself into harmony
 with nature and her phases, he grows modest
 and laborious, and in his oft returning seasons
 of thought, he seeks solitude for silence
 only can draw the divinest thoughts from man.
 Ask the man of thought and solitude what he
 most enjoys and he will answer "to be let a-
 lone." No other place can grant him more
 happiness than where he finds his coveted
 silence and solitude; here his soul transcends
 the bonds that hold the ordinary mind and
 mingles with, and draws sustenance from
 the invisible.

What a pitiable sight is a man with
 ability less than his ambitions, unable to
 carry out a single aspiration, and yet our

land abounds in such persons. Let us begin while our youth is fresh to build for the life that is to follow. Now is the time to make ourselves men and women, The days of chivalry will never return, the warrior of other days has become extinct with his praise, let us then, leave off our gloatings over the inscrutable past and live in the enveloping now. Now the day has come when we are born out of the eternal silence, and now we will live - live for ourselves and not as the pall bearers of a funeral but as the upholders of our age.

Knowledge is power, knowledge is hope, it begets virtue, it begets respect and honor, its ways are ways of pleasantness and its merchandise is better than that of gold and silver, its power commands nations, its fruits are comfort, satisfaction, rest, its achievements reach the highest pinnacle of human fame, its transportations leap about the mediocere march of intellects and like the lighthouse in darkness, sheds its rays far out upon the surging mass of humans below.

What nobler thing can man be drawn to? Herein lies the power that gives impulse

to all great movements, Abandon literary talent and you send a nation back to half civilization, Burn the books and close the schools of our land and soon we revert to the savage state. But when the Americans point to Webster as their greatest man and the Greeks to Demosthenes and the English to Chatham and immortalize their names in the records of the nations, who then will venture to say that literary achievement is not the grandest thing that can engage the mind of man.

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