

Strength by Overcoming.

As we leave the work where we have been led by those more experienced in the results of labor and go to fields where must set the tasks for ourselves and sometimes for others, we are forced to consider what course of action will lead to the greatest development and be most useful to all concerned.

When full freedom comes to the youth his position is one of peril. Untill now he has been directed in the management of his time; he has had to labor at home and school, willingly or unwillingly. But now the bonds are loosed, and he is at liberty to go wherever he desires and do whatever he thinks best. Shall he toil on as before or shall he seek the paradise that ease and pleasure seems to have given to other? This question so easy of answer to him whom years of experience disciplined, is perplexing to the one who stands at the parting

of the ways with little knowledge of the destination of either. He hears the siren voice of Pleasure, "Come with me and rest; why should you vex yourself with care and toil? Did not the wise man say that all is vanity? Why then waste life away for something that can never satisfy?" How tempting is the call to one who feels that labor is a curse to mankind; but if he heeds and follows will he find the ease and satisfaction promised? The world is full of failures that have been made in just this way. Men avoid difficulties, they shrink from what is uncomfortable, they leave the rugged paths to walk in flowery valleys; and thus unconsciously court their own destruction. It is when physical life is relaxed that weakness and disease fasten upon the system. It is when mental life is at low ebb that temptation comes with mighty power.

Pleasure may sing loudly of halls of mirth and revelry - of wine and feasts - of wealth and honor and fame,

but he who accepts the first and expects without exertion to reach the last finds his strength failing, his opportunities passing away, his hopes fading, while yet his desires are unsatisfied.

Then when he is least able to bear them the heavy burdens of life are still laid upon him, crushing him down into misery or perhaps into vice from which he escapes only into the grave. This is the short history of many a life that might have been bright and useful and honored, but that has been lived with weakness, or with evil influence and shame and disgrace.

No strong character is built up without determined effort. Power comes through exercise and not through ease. Nature illustrates this in many ways. The storm swept hills have the sturdiest oaks. It is daily exercise that enables the athlete to perform feats of marvelous agility and that enabled the unarmed gladiator to cope with wild beasts in the Roman

amphitheater. As the body is developed by exercise so is the mind by study. This has enabled philosophers to trace out the laws of nature and discover many of the hidden mysteries of creation. Recognizing these truths the Greeks subjected their children to such hardships, both of physical training and mental discipline as seems to us almost inhuman. But they developed a race that was able to defeat the vastly superior forces of Xerxes and to bring about "the most illustrious age the world has ever seen."

The power of a will trained not to yield to every impulse but to overcome every obstacle can scarcely be estimated. How different is its possessor from him who yields to pleasure! Instead of weakness there is strength. Instead of fleeing at the noise of a leaf he calmly faces the foe, and with steady nerve and mighty arm beats down the enemies of right truth. Instead of being

tossed about by every opposing circumstance, he makes his circumstances by conquering his environments. Instead of becoming a public charge the public are dependant upon him for their leadership. No remorse of wasted life drives him to despair, but a sense of duty faithfully performed encourages him onward; no gloomy forebodings of the future haunt him while in solitude, but he enjoys glowing anticipations of good, good that is the natural result of his accomplishments.

The steadfastness of such a character cannot fail of emulation. By this the weak are strengthened and the strong stimulated to redoubled energy; so that by the example of a single individual the whole community may be raised to a higher plane of civilization.

We rejoice in our glorious republic with its free institutions. But what were the means by which it was secured? It took the enduring

energy and determination of a Columbus to overcome the opposition of existing circumstances. Had not men endured the perils of exploration and colonization of the then wild regions, where savages lurked in every dale ready to destroy, our country would never have been settled by the white man. Had not these settlers amid circumstances of severest hardships in turn subdued the French, the Indians, and the British we had yet been subject to despotic power. So too the Constitution which transformed a powerless confederation into the mighty nation whose happy government we enjoy is the result of the tireless effort and persevering skill of those great men who framed it. Again the principles by which we have our liberty had been secured by the struggles of Englishmen against the hand of tyranny hundreds of years before.

So it might be shown that all that is valuable in science, in art, in literature, in all the agencies and institutions which tend to better our estate is the result of overcoming difficulties.

In individual life this is doubly true. Only as we conquer do we achieve, and there is no uncertainty about it. Every difficulty overcome makes us stronger for the next. Every effort put forth in right life puts into us the stamina of endurance. All nature is pledged to us on this line, and the brightest promises of this life and the next are given "to him that overcometh."

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