

The True Idea of Success in Life.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

UNION AND PHILANTHROPIC SOCIETIES

OF

Hampden Sidney College,

JUNE 10, 1857,

By REV. JOSEPH R. WILSON,

STAUNTON, VA.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

HAMPDEN SIDNEY COLLEGE, *Pr. Ed. Va.*
June 11, 1857.

REV. JOSEPH R. WILSON,

Dear Sir,—At meetings of the Literary Societies, held this evening, we were appointed to tender to you the thanks of the Societies for your able, instructive and eloquent address, and earnestly solicit a copy of the same for publication.

Very truly yours,

J. M. SMITH,
J. M. WALTON,
J. X. MORTON,
Union Committee.
C. V. CARRINGTON,
P. WINSTON,
J. J. DUPUY,
Philanthropic Committee.

STAUNTON, JUNE 15, 1857.

*Messrs. J. M. SMITH, C. V. CARRINGTON and others, Committees
Of the Union and Philanthropic Literary Societies of H. S. College:*

Your polite note of the 11th instant contains a request which, on several accounts, I am reluctant to grant; and yet I do not feel at liberty to refuse it. The address of which you speak so favorably will be found, upon perusal, to bear all the marks of haste. But, seeing that it is upon a subject well calculated to awaken the thoughts of young men commencing life, my meagre presentation of so practical a theme might be useful to some as a suggestive outline to be filled up by their own reflections. Do, therefore, as you please with a production which, notwithstanding its faults, I dedicate to the students of Hampden Sidney, who listened to it with so many marks of favor.

Yours, sincerely,

JOSEPH R. WILSON.

ADDRESS.

Gentlemen of the Union and Philanthropic Literary Societies:

I have accepted the invitation to address you on this anniversary occasion, not alone for the honor of being the first to represent before the public your conjoined membership, never before united under similar circumstances. My chief motive for appearing here to-day sprang from the natural desire to take part in the annual festivities of an Institution of Learning, which was, during several happy years, the leading object of my thoughts and the foremost subject of my prayers. More gladly than I can tell, do I return to these scenes of a former labor and to this home of a past enjoyment. With unfeigned eagerness have I come up to this dear old place, to meet those cherished friends who, not forgotten, have also, I feel sure, been not forgetting. But yet I would that this hour of gladness were not fringed with a sorrow, which, after all, makes me almost wish myself not here. I am oppressed by the fact, that, amid the familiar persons of well-remembered neighbors and friends, there are those absent whom these scenes used always to welcome, but whom their recurrence can never greet again. How shall I proceed to the subject of my address without pausing a moment for the purpose of letting my thoughts come back from the grave of that best old man, who so lately stood the pastor of the church worshipping in this house, with feeble frame, but strong heart and unquenchable earnestness, to deliver divine messages from a pulpit, not yet filled by his successor. Excellent man! Noble Christian! Faithful preacher! May some attending angel carry thee our blessings on this day of our assembling near that sacred desk upon which thy lamented virtues have left imperishable honor!

Neither can I persuade myself to omit regretful mention of another venerable friend—a former trustee of this col-

lege—who stood by it through the various fortunes of almost a half century—the true gentleman, the graceful scholar, the influential legislator, the cordial friend, the humble Christian, over whose death I dropped a tear in my distant home. I allude to the late *Henry E. Watkins*.

Others, too, are before my mind. But I must not sadden you with remembrances which belong more to private afflictions than to public sorrows. Yet I feel that I may be forgiven for calling to mind just one other of the former residents of this place, and who, though, thank God, not yet deceased, is gone from *these* scenes forevermore. I cannot be expected to suppress a feeling of profound sorrow at *his* departure, who has, till now, been associated in my recollections of this place with all the best hours of my own stay here! Nor can I be thought an intruder into the future of this institution with an unnecessary suggestion of painful thought, when I call thus to mind the rich treasures of his learning, and the brilliancy of his genius, and the nobility of his character—whose whole life of irrepressible energy I thought would have been devoted to this important college. But *Lewis W. Green* is gone hence—and I follow him to his new sphere of duties with a blessing and a sigh.

At the same time that I do this, let me not hesitate to do the very pleasing thing of congratulating the college and the community, the church and the State, upon the most judicious selection, lately made, of a successor in the Presidential chair of this Institution, who is not likely to permit any ancient glory to dim, or suffer any future to regret, the past!

But I must hasten in search of a theme which will occupy our thoughts differently from these reminiscences. And what shall that theme be? What well-worn cloth of literary discussion shall I endeavor to pick other threads from—or what new subject shall be found large enough to fill this hour, standing as it does by itself in all your year, equally distant from the spirit of dry discussion and the spirit of fanciful declamation? Do you want advice? My head is not gray. And yet I may try, before I close, the virtue of a few scat-

tered hairs in that direction. Do you want a mere *display* of oratorical fireworks? My head is a magazine neither of scholarly rockets or sophomoric (pardon me) whirligigs. Shall I speak of those institutions of the South which attract the notice, just now, of all the world, and bear upon their front the various readings of this nation's history in all the future? I would, indeed, love to swing a flail of rebuke over the heads of fanatical men, who, among the ices of the North, can talk deliberately of quenching here those bright domestic fires which are kept a-burning, as they were kindled, in the mutual good will of white and black! But no. What good will it now do to them or us, to indulge in argument which is self-evident, or reproof which is best left to Him who conducts even the movements of madness itself to the issues of His eternal glory and of the welfare of the race.

Rather, let it be my task to make this occasion the witness of an attempt to drive out of mind the unquiet southing of political breezes, and to bring into mind reflections that mingle less with storm and wreck. I would be only too glad to bring before you, in the peaceful atmosphere of a calm discussion, some exhibition of a compass of life whose dips and variations might be tabled in degrees and minutes for your guidance and mine over the sea of a future individual experience. And I will, accordingly, risk the charge of presumption by announcing for my subject to-day: *The True Idea of Individual Success in Life*—of presumption, for I thus seem to throw myself amid the meshes of a most entangling discussion; seeing that success in life is so many-sided, dependent upon so many uncontrollable circumstances, and is, withal, so much the fruit of individual peculiarities. It looks like a very desperate undertaking, to lay hold of those principles which enter essentially into all successful living, when, beforehand, we know them to lie imbedded within the layers of a thousand extraneous and misleading matters. It has the appearance which might be worn by an attempt to ascertain the orbit of a planet when you are to guess at many of the perturbing causes, and cannot find with certainty the leading

strings of these radial, transversal and orthogonal forces which are to account for every unexpected sweep of outward and inward curvature in the vast globe's eccentric flight through space.

I make these preliminary remarks, not for the purpose of exaggerating the difficulties of my task, and thereby seeking credit at the outset for boldness of literary adventure; but simply to claim a little indulgence if I shall walk only upon the doubtful line of approximations to truth and not upon the sure pathway of absolute certainty—being compelled to leave out of calculation many a subtle influence and many a distant reference.

I shall begin, therefore, by finding fault with some abuses to which the word "success" is commonly subjected. It is often treated as a synonyme of "*fortunate*"—thereby doing homage to the idea which the irrational heathens embodied in their deification of the god Fortune. You form a purpose—you pursue it—you succeed in its accomplishment. The world cries out, "*fortunate man!*" But there is a protest against this thought to be brought by every serious mind—a protest which spurns the entire doctrine of *chance*, and which will extend no quarter to the notion of *unaccountable* luck; and which will see no order of results springing from mere *fortuitous* events. If success be a good, as it is, then is there no altar of thankfulness to be erected for it upon any such unchristian ground. And do you not see that it is from such an idea of success in human undertakings, that those meagre and unsatisfying generalities have sprung which tell us, in all the pet forms of a stilted rhetoric, that men are dependent for their prosperous lives upon unexpected circumstances, and accidental opportunities, and peculiarities of the times, and a thousand irresistible influences, which make them the creatures, not the creators, of their success—generalities, these, which find frequent expression in the condensed exclamation, which has in its favor just what the concentrated juices of some deadly plants have—*i. e.*, the instant exhibition of their one drop of poison, previously spread through all the sap of

root and branch in thin and undetectable dilution—the exclamation, “*circumstances make the man*”—a falsehood glaring enough, one would think, to be the companion of that similar one which certain philosophers have propounded with great self-acclaim, “*the soil makes the plant*.” In both cases the *seed* is left out! The earth alone can produce vegetation, but some other than its own inert power must insert the living germ of its varied fruits—else would the entire world be as barren and uninhabitable as the wastes of Arabia, or the desolations of Mont Blanc.

It is, in fact, in the insane acknowledgment of the government of mere chance, that we can discover the roots of all that theory of progressive development which was handed over the whole creation, material and immaterial, to the arranging and elevating forces of accidental concourses of atoms, with confusion the parent of order, and darkness the creator of light, and ugliness the giver of beauty—a doctrine that finds such a sweet setting-forth in the “*Vestiges of Creation*”—a book, however, which the lamented Hugh Miller turned against itself when he trampled upon its spider-spun theories with the awful footsteps of God’s own truth, and magnified, in the light of a divine presence, the testimony of the rocks above the testimony of presumptuous genius—leaving, indeed, no vestiges of a mal-creation which could reveal itself only in the awful lie that denied for its successive stages a proper Creator. No. The monkey must remain a monkey, however long he may rest upon his tail, or try to rub his hairy paws into the smoothness of a lady’s hands. It is to be hoped, gentlemen, nevertheless, that there will be a partial revival of this doctrine of circumstance-development, that it may be applied to the cases of those youngsters who, in all our places of public gathering, have been transformed by Fashion, through the help of a fortuitous concourse of silly parents, and eager tailors and misapplied cash, into the form of huge slender-legged, shad-bodied, but goosey-headed *Shanghai*s. We wish for a reversal of the tide of social circumstances which will bear such back into their proper nur-

series and schools, where they may succeed in building up a better manliness than that which rivals the doubtful glories of imported roosters!

But, another abuse which the word success is always undergoing, is that which puts it into warm juxta-position with *fame*. Success is stripped of its worth and its distinction unless it be a *published success*. People must know its history; and there must always circulate around it the breath of *praise*. *Obscurity* is a failure. Nothing important can be accomplished in a *corner*, away from the eye of the world, and shaded from the sun of popular favor. But, be it marked, fame has a crown, not for the *multitude*, but for the *few*. History has prepared its illuminated roll for the names of *hundreds*, not for the names of *millions*. And to what a narrow limit does this consideration contract all our ideas of success, if success must always be led by the hand of fame? Nay—what a lie does this notion publish with reference to those who, on account of their more slender abilities, or through some other cause, have never known their names to be pronounced outside of their own immediate neighborhood, or their lives to be considered great by a single individual, and yet, in plying all the true agencies of success, have, in their sphere, been eminently successful? Their lives may have been uneventful, but not therefore unsuccessful. Their story has stepped softly, and made no noise—but yet it may have stepped with all its proper strength and proper straightforwardness and proper firmness. Can you say that the mountain-pine is a better type of successful growth than the lily of the vale? Is it upon those lofty elevations of the earth's surface which catch the earliest rays of the rising sun, and wear the crown of glory which every traveler tries in vain to describe—is it *there* you look for the most pleasing exhibitions of that vegetative life which the earth was mainly intended to mature? By no means. You rather wander, with delighted heart, and swelling gratitude, over the broad acres of some juicy pasturage, or along the slopes of some golden harvest field, and recognize a divine success

in each blade of grass and in every rustling head of grain—no *one* of them prominent, but *in the mass*, wearing an undying glory. It is true, we would not have the mountains all levelled with the plains; but rather that than see all the plains raised into mountains. We could not wish the earth to be stripped of its sublimities; but might they not be better spared than its lowlier qualities? No—the exact truth is, that true success in any enterprise is not to be measured by the prominence which its agents may acquire in its accomplishment. For the common soldier who stands in his place awaiting the shock of battle, contributing by his fall to the delay of a sweeping squadron, did, though unbulletined in the official recital of the day's victory, do as *successful* a work as the plumed general who commanded the army in whose ranks he bled—as successful, if not as *renowned*—for he was in *his* right place, taking an indispensable share of the day's business, to which he gave every power he *had*, and for which he suffered all he *could*. And what is true of any particular enterprise, is true of the whole of life. Did no lady but Miss Nightingale ever succeed in binding up the sores of wounded men? And would her success have been less had her *fame* been nothing? Was there never any successful friend of prison-ameliorations besides Howard, because no other has reached Howard's *measure* of success or rivalled his glory of renown? Is there no hero but the hero of the blood-stained field? Is there no luxury of successful execution but that which tickles the ear from the waves of popular applause? Is a small circle of duties, successfully fulfilled at every point of its circumference, and through every line of its area, less complete in all the marvels of its wondrous properties, than a larger one which, though easier traced as it lay upon the territory of life, is nevertheless just another circle having the same definition as the first:—grander, doubtless, in its *proportions*, but not in its *perfection*—a mightier, but not a truer element of personal history—bearing all over it the glory of a harder, but not the glory of a nobler, work.

Yes—the more quickly you destroy the fiction which has wedded success in life to celebrity of life, the better. And this, not only in consideration of what we have already said, but also because it is quite certain that fame among men is not the true standard of excellence, with only history and reason as the judge, to say nothing of the teaching of infallible Revelation. There may be—there are—great men, where no trumpeting of mighty deeds declares their greatness; while, on the other hand, distinction in position is often associated with unmanliness in character—sometimes with terrible crime. Besides, the procurement of eminence is the most uncertain of achievements. Loud the huzzas of to-day; fierce the denunciations of to-morrow. And, accordingly, both philosophy and religion declare against the wisdom of desiring a fame which, insecure in its tenure, factitious in its satisfactions, and ordinarily selfish in its influence, is not promotive of any personal or social good, when sought for its own sake. If it come, unbidden—well. Then use it for higher successes. But to desire it for anything contained in itself—that is erecting a throne upon a mountain of sand.

A third and last abuse of the word “success,” which I will here mention, is that which, in the minds of so many, keeps it constantly associated with the acquisition of *property*. Indeed, there underlies this tendency just what may be discovered at the foundation of the desire for renown. The idea of *power* is beneath both. But distinction refers the aspirant after its honors rather to the power which the *intellect* may wield; or, if not intellect, it is at least that real, though subtle *moral* power, which goes naturally down from elevated station or unusual prominence, to influence, insensibly, those who are, by such superiority, more or less overawed. Wealth, however, seems to place within reach a leverage which, at this day, has a greater purchase upon the sources of human movements, and at precisely the most available points, than any other mere worldly agency whatever. In truth, before this power, there is at least one kind of distinction itself which falls prostrate. I mean *hereditary* distinction. Crowned

heads are considered of little account unless those heads are stamped upon untold coins.

A Rothschild can now snap his fingers with impunity in the face of monarchs who date their ancestral renown back through the line of a hundred kings—any one of the first ninety of whom would never have suffered such a subject to live at all. Statesmen sit oftener in the counting-rooms of gigantic banks than in the offices of empty official power. The capitols of countries are not where their seats of government are placed by law, but where the exchange has built them over the vaults of minted money. More power goes from Wall street than from Washington. The pulse of the Bourse marks the rise and fall of Napoleon upon the unsteady wave of his popular rule. The merchants of England decide the alternating fortunes of parliamentary parties. Old Bacon ought to have lived in our day. He would not have been so foolish as to write "*Knowledge is power.*" He would have satirized the thought, that "*Money is power;*" and the more familiar saying would have run in a form which seems to contain a sigh within it: "*Knowledge ought to be power.*" Is it, therefore, a matter of surprise, that the imagination of those who are just commencing life should be captivated by the prospect of wielding so mighty an influence? Can it be wondered at, that the acquisition of property should, with multitudes, be pursued as the end of all enterprise, and the glory of all success? And that the whole web of life should be deemed mean unless warped and woofed with the glittering threads of gold and silver—and that *poverty*, however respectable, or however circumstanced, should be looked at askance with an eye of pity, above which arches a supercilious scorn? Seneca wrote the praises of poverty upon a table of gold, but would have clung with a tighter grasp to all that the table represented than to whatever of good his philosophy set forth, had it been proposed that he should reduce that philosophy to practice. I verily believe that the Israelites would have shown a warmer attachment to the ark had it been concealed less by goat skins and badgers' skins, and glittered more

showily with the glory of *gold*—and that there would not have been so prompt and universal a worship of the Sinaitic calf, had it been constructed of *lead*, or shewed its stupid front adorned with *brass*. Milton struck a chord of deepest satire, whose twang shall be heard through all time, when he described Mammon as architect of Pandemonium :

. . . . "Mammon led them on,
Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
From heaven; for even in heaven his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent; admiring more
The riches of heaven's pavement-trodden gold,
Than aught divine or holy else, enjoyed
In vision beatific."

But how few acknowledge the force of the satire; seeing that they probably first begin to whip their appreciation of the poet to the utmost height of approval, whenever they behold—

. . . . "Out of the earth a fabric huge
Rise like an exhalation, with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies, and voices sweet,
Built like a temple, where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars, overlaid
With golden architrave; nor did there want
Cornice or fringe, with bossy sculptures graven:
The roof was fretted gold."

And that unconsciously to themselves a host of readers feel thankful to the poet whose imagination has built, in the regions of the lost, a gorgeous palace which they would now almost sell their lives to enjoy, and who conceive no element of punishment in living beneath the blazing sky of such a glorious temple, and enthroning their immortality, where

. . . . "Not Babylon
Nor great Alcario, such magnificence
Equalled in all their glories, to enshrine
Belus, or Serapis, their gods; or seat
Their kings, when Egypt and Assyria strove
In wealth and luxury."

But such a taste may lift devils and heathens to their

highest imaginable elevation of prosperous life, but not those who know the easiest lessons which their immortality teaches, and can catch ever so distant a glimpse of that crown which awaits the royal brow of true manhood, raised to its proper honors of enthroned *worth*. Hogarth should never have suffered his pictures of the Good and Bad Apprentice to identify virtue with material prosperity.

To gather, now, all that I have said, back into that one compacter thought from which it has been all evolved, I deny that the true success of any person's life is achieved under the influence of stupid *fortune*, or is mainly directed by coveted *fame*, or runs in no higher way than that which leads to *wealth*. And do you wonder that I have not plaited with this threefold eord of error the strand, too, of *happiness*, and placed it away from the sight of him who would be a prosperous liver? You need not. For I am prepared to maintain the affirmation, that true happiness and true success go hand in hand; and that every life which extends its journey over the allotted territory of its time, always keeping in sight of its proper results, will never have its eyes turned from the direction of its proper rewards. Indeed, the thought will well bear another form, lying closer, may be, to the truth in the premises—even the form which declares the pursuit of *real happiness* to be nothing else than the pursuit of *real success*. For, surely, no notion can carry with it a balder front of error than that our *best enjoyments* lie aside from the path of our *best living*. They are that path's very pavement! Nay, they are as the oxygen of its exhilarating atmosphere! Are they not, at any rate, an indispensable attendance upon its travellers; and a most needful encouragement to them; aye, a *very journeying staff*? It is they who mistake life, whose ways skirt the edge of dangerous cliffs, or are hedged with briars which hurt without repaying for the pain, by compensating fragrance—seeing that these ways lead directly off from the true end of man, and belie at every step the truths which, written upon his nature, were designed to be retraced in his history. What

is Fortune, but a most tantalizing goddess, whose form is fair, but unsubstantial—smiling only to deceive—beckoning on to a fancied good, which her own hand is the first to destroy—opening her treasures only to display her poverty? And what is *ambition*, but that lofty thing which builds gorgeous palaces on dissolving clouds, and factitiously illumines her gemmy crowns with a pastry jewelry, or sets them round with the consuming fire that burns like a thousand curses into the brain!—a devil showing all the kingdoms of the world with no one of them in bestowable possession? And what is *wealth*, but the god of cankering disappointments, whose nod rains gold, indeed, into the lap of the worshiper, but whose presence sheds the influence of a deadly palsy upon the *heart*—a sham idol—an enthroned *skeleton* of good—a majestic symbol of emptiness? Oh, is not the world covered with the ruins of these miserable tyrants of life; and is not human history a long record of the gathering harvests of the crop which has grown up into arrows and death from *their* sowing, done with broad-casting arms of power on all the otherwise fair fields of home and enterprise and joy?

It is here the time to say, that when we speak of success in life, no other success is meant than that of the *man*, in distinction from that of his *profession* or *business*—these latter having laws of their own, which we care not now to consider. It is perfectly obvious that an individual may fail in reaching the life which he ought to possess, *as an individual*, and yet be eminently successful in every *professional* undertaking and every *business* enterprise. A villain in character may be a genius in planning and performing. A Caesar Borgia might be a successful Pope. A Professor Webster might be a gifted naturalist. A Bacon could be the “greatest and meanest” of men. There is a success lying deeper than anything that appears upon the surface of life; and so is there a failure dropping its head far below the most brilliant show of eminent success. If success consists in attaining the highest possible maturity of a manly character, for the sake of its inherent excellence,

and because of the prospect it opens for advancing the interests of a common humanity—then does it belong to the inward man, and not to his outward work. True, these may and do go together, in times without number—perhaps, indeed, it is the law that he whose honest manhood is most erect, and is beaming around upon others with an eye of kindest sympathies, is also he to whom the straitest paths of worldly advantage open up. But the exceptions are numerous enough to justify a distinct set of laws (a la Barnum) for the procurement of moneyed or other external success; and to leave, in the occupancy of a territory all its own, the better and higher success that belongs to the true life of every individual.

But I am anxious to make this distinction, not merely because it can be made with due attention to philosophic accuracy; but, mainly, because it enables every one to see that he stands pretty much on a level with all about him—that he need not consider himself as wanting in the elements of success, because he lacks *capital*, or lacks *opportunity*, or lacks *genius*—but only then when he finds himself building up *no character for his own consciousness to approve, and pursuing no life which is a blessing to others.*

Go with me to one of the obscurest dwellings in a remote district of your Western Blue Hills, and I will show you a man whose success in life is almost complete, and yet no knowledge of his simple history has ever gone beyond the mountains which stand so close around his humble home. The little lap of earth which holds his worldly treasure, surprises you, first of all, by its contrasts of cultivated beauty with the native wildness of the place. Every foot of land bears the impress of industry, and you feel that the very genius of toil has left not one spot untouched by its needed drop of manly sweat. Even Taste has been there with her adorning hand—and leads you, pleased and wondering, to the shady sweetness of the rude homestead. The man you seek meets your step at the door where not many strangers have ever found their way—meets your coming with all the frank simplicity of an

honest welcome. Look at his face. It leads your gaze through a transparent veil of natural sobriety to a quick sight of the gentle reign of a deep inward peace. You behold that rarest sight, a happy man. You enter, and see the secret of his happiness. Does it come from the possession of wife and children whom his heart has here hidden from the world, jealous of the treasures of its love? No. That wife is bed-ridden under the hand of hopeless disease—and those children are compelled to find in him both father and mother. But yet they all are most dear to one who seems to rejoice in embracing their dependence within the arms of his helpful strength, and in the bosom of his long-cultivated sympathies. See how his smile falls in flakes of light upon the wan face of that constant sufferer, covering it with the subdued joy of sweet content. See how his ready hand reduces all household disorder to that cheery tidiness which speaks so kindly to the nerves of the invalid. See the tenderness of his timely caresses, and the wisdom of his paternal guidance, as he conducts the children's young thoughts and unpracticed feelings from step to step of his own measure of maturity. Listen, as God often does, to the voice of his Christian prayer, swelling with the triumphs of his Christian hope, and striking sheer of every doubt, with bound after bound of strong faith—a prayer which brings the unspeakable peace of Heaven to watch with him through another night of nursing, and prepare him for the exertions of another morning. Aye—attend him at your leisure through many a day of hard work within and hard work without. Take account of his motives. Measure the loftiness of his principles of conduct. Read the golden tracery of thanks which adorns the cup of blessings which he has given to neighbor and enemy. Go round and round the little circle of his obligations, and see not one duty overlooked, not one relation obscured, not one talent with a napkin about it—but all complete in the beauty of an unbroken assemblage of parts, with an adored God enthroned at the glowing centre, and a sufficiently loved humanity streaming light around the

circumference. Do this, and you will know the story of a poor man whose success is written above the stars—a story standing brightly apart from the sad observation which dictated the question, “O Lord, why hast thou made all men in vain?” It is the brief story of a man who has made of *himself and his life all that he could*; and the secret springs of whose satisfaction might be envied by many a princely merchant dwelling in palatial avenues; by many a garlanded chief, glorying in a hundred victories; by many a literary king, looking over half a world of subject minds.

Put the history of this unknown mountain hero of success over against that striking history of failure, which yet has filled the world with a blaze of sudden glory. It is that of a man high in conventional rank; born where wealth brought luxurious living for mind and body upon her thousand streams; and where station commanded a thousand friends to fill the passing hours with their mannerly presence and cultivated thought. He was a man of genius, too, whose mighty mind seemed destined for the throne of a perpetual empire of influence—a genius that took the paths of poetry for its sublime walks; and, with its many-stringed harp of perfect tone swept over the nations such entrancing music as silenced every rival, and exhausted every feeling of popular delight. He was, withal, a lover of freedom; and did not hesitate to seek fields of blood where to commingle his own, when, far from home, he saw an opportunity to strike, for her, a blow upon the neck of tyranny. In the fairness of early youth, and at the height of the brightest fame, he died—leaving his life a *blank*—and drawing to his untimely grave no stream of tears but those which men shed at the sad remembrance of a wasted life and a prostituted genius. Those who may have envied his early fame, drew back aghast from the sight of that dark heart which breathed misanthropy through nearly all his verse, or which wailed an unavailing distress in bitter prose, or which denied all good in a vicious life of egotistical folly. Though great, he was mean; though highly cultured, he was unmanly; though gifted with

wonderful intellectual power, his heart had the immaturity, without the innocence, of a child's; though having an utterance to whose sweetness every ear gave absorbed attention, he yet employed his eloquent thought for the ruin of his kind! Every step of his *apparent* success left the dark imprint of *real failure*. And I have sometimes believed that *his* history of mental eminence was inserted in the volume of our earthly lessons, upon the principle which led to the inspired recital of Samson's wonderful physical strength—that we might know the utter weakness of the man whose powers are mighty in only *one direction*—and that human life has no success for the poor fool who thinks to do aught, for himself or others, unless his *outward deeds* express the harmonies of an *inward completeness*. Success is a fiction, unless it tread upon the solid rocks of a personal worth—for it can otherwise have no permanence, produce no satisfaction, distribute no benefits, earn no rewards. But it is a reality within every one's reach, just so soon as he will commence its pursuit upon the path, where, amid all the obscurities of a private life, or all the honors of a public, he will be content to live true to the possibilities of his own manhood—being willing to fail of money, or applause, or external advantage of any sort, so that he may keep hold of the unpurchasable realizations and unlimited promises of a *lofty character*. My successful man is Horace's happy man—he who, at the close of life's great work-day, can say with truth: "*Vixi*"—say it of his *whole man*—full of the consciousness that as an intellectual, moral, active being, he has lived *his best*, for himself and others. He is not as rich as his neighbor A.—he is not so famous as his neighbor B.—he enjoys not the elegant leisure of his neighbor C.—but his character for sobriety, for uprightness of dealing, for benevolence, for manly sympathies, for earnest industry, for Christian principle—is equal to theirs, and a fountain of unutterable blessings to himself, and uncounted blessings to others. Perhaps his very poverty has contributed to his success. Probably his very obscurity has helped him on to his elevation of self-esteem and general respect. It is likely

that with more leisure he would have been far less than the man he is.

We are now come to the full discovery of the true "*nature of success in life*." I say its true *nature*—not to the discovery of its ordinary meaning—its *nature*, not its *circumstances*, not its masks, not its material features, not its rose-colored attendants—not what success is imagined to be, but what it is; not its poetry, or its romance, or its theory—but its reality. It will not take long to state the true idea of this great reality.

It is, first of all, a deep truth—deeper than it often appears—that life itself is to every individual a rich possession. And *this estimation of life* lies at the root of all true success. *He* has taken the first step in the direction which will lead him to a right use of life, who feels that it is a good thing to live; and *he* has made a giant's bound towards his goal, who realizes that it is a glorious and a noble thing to live. I do not mean that he is to place this value upon the mere act of breathing; or the mere machinery of locomotion; or, even, upon the mysterious principle which lies back of all that is visible, and tangible, and phenomenal. But he is to recognize the whole of those inward movements and outward surroundings which, together, make him a *living man* in the sense that he is an inhabitant of such a world as this is, whose air he is permitted to inhale, whose beauties he is fitted to admire, whose enjoyments he is invited to seek, and with whose fellow-inhabitants he is expected to conjoin in working out the history of its days, and years, and periods—nay, a *living man* in the sense that his is the foremost being of all the earth, for which all else has been made, and is ever engaged in preparing blood and warmth, energy and joy for it. He who has no reverence for his own life, is not its full owner. He who cannot see in it a divine gift—aye, a divine *nature*—is not one to know how to use it aright. No one who altogether lacks his appreciation of life who wrote, "*Life is real, life is earnest*," is prepared for its true successes. It is not a gift of accident, but of God. It is not, either, a something which

we are to *endure*, but to use, to improve, to make the most of. Life is not a season through which the soul is to dream. It is a day in which the soul must act. There was no higher boon for the Creator to bestow than life. For it was of the nature of His own essence—a sharer in His own awful being—a finite circle of forces, having the qualities of His own infinite circle—the blessing which, from its immeasurable magnitude, includes every other. As a vast storehouse might include the treasures which wisdom and power and love could bring to it from all the regions of earth—the spices of distant islands—the gems of far-off seas—the raiment of the cunning loom—the furniture which responds to every want of rest, or desire of luxury, or anxiety of economy—the adornments which meet every demand of taste—all that can enter into the calculations of wealth, or the delights of comfort, or the exigencies of society—all these to the owner of the storehouse, to make him all that earth can make him. So is life a mighty treasury, which has had gathered into it all that God could place there from himself—wonders of His love—majesties of His justice—might of His power—eternities of His thought—delights of His holiness—purities of His truth—these in embryo, but in growing embryo—these in attitude and amid possibilities which enable life to look upward to its everlasting home of endless progressions and increasing godlikeness. Life is, therefore, *above trade*—is greater than *honor*—is superior to *wealth*. It is that for which all these were *made*, not that which any or all these can *make*. Whatever prosperities belong to trade, come from the monarchal life which pushes it on—whatever glories encrown fame, have been gemmed by the life which these glories are striving to honor—whatever of wealth gathers around our path, has come there to do homage to the greatness of the life which has called it into being. The *end* of things is life—it is never a *means*, except to help *itself* on from stage to stage of its endless elevations.

How preposterous, then, to make the idea of successful *life* take the form of success in some of the *circumstances* of

life—to think of the *greater* success as measurable by the *less*—to exalt the mere foot-prints above the lordship of the being whose tread indicates the strength and spring of unbounded dominion!

But the life of this life is *character*—is *virtue*—is every form of excellence harmonizing in the perfect unit of individual manhood. And the nearest approximation, therefore, to that which an individual *ought to be*, is the mark of the highest degree of earthly success, so far as the inward possession of a true life is concerned—a cultivated mind; a trained heart; security of judgment; rooted principle; fruitful benevolence; genuine charity; spirited sweetness of disposition; immoveable fidelity; purifying faith; cheerful hope—these belong to the rich cluster of grapes which hang upon the matured vine of God-given life. And is not the wine of so noble a vintage as frequently pressed into the cup which the horny hand of daily labor lifts to the well-pleased lips, as it is into the cup which the soft fingers of elegant ease daintily bestows upon itself? Oftener, may be. Have I not seen the man whose success in merchandising has filled a thousand beginners with envy, going to his luxurious home with a heart closed against his kind more tightly than ever his winter coat was buttoned upon his hard bosom; with memory staggering under the recollection of his uncounted wealth, yet nothing revolving in all the world of his thoughts but the plans which he is devising for accumulating more; his integrity purely mercantile and worldly; his hand still convulsively grasping at every opportunity which fortune presents, yet having no hold upon aught higher than his own bowing head of gray? Oh, he is rich! his residence a prince might covet! His family sits engilt upon the giddiest elevations of fashion—the whole atmosphere of home a whisper of luxury!—but successful in *life*! Away with the absurdity. His *business*, not *he*, is succeeding! Else would that mouth sometimes explode in the laughter of a happy heart! His ships look grand upon the sea, and swim lightly in the dock!—but himself—that moody man of ledgers and cash accounts,

what is he since he has sold his *life* to his *business*?—a wretched Prometheus, who, having animated a clay-man with the fire of his own immortal spirit, has been chained, by the self-asserting god of that degraded spirit, to a mountain of grovelling cares, with a vulture preying on his vitals!—the victim of a mighty failure, and the type of all such as are going to the end of life without having known *the true value of that life*; seeing that they are the fools who have converted the glorious *end* into a degraded *means*!

I might here show that I have a deal to say on the relations which character bears to business—a branch of the subject which would bear some learned quotations, and not a little extra rhetoric! I feel that I have dwelt too long, perhaps, upon the need of building up a character—not too much for its importance, but too much for the harmonious proportions of this address. It will compel me to pack in a corner that which would well endure expansion over all the room allotted to me on this occasion, without its getting too thin to carry away with you. I wished to enlarge upon the subject of *doing*, as well as upon that of *being*—of success in *action*, as well as success in preparing for action—of the true idea of prosperity, manifesting itself outwardly, as well as that true idea showing its essential characteristics within. With a proper fear of criticism before my eyes, I will use words, which, though *German* in their suggestions, are nevertheless germane to my present thought: I had wished to speak, not only of subjective, but likewise of objective, success in life. And, assuming that you have been interested in what has been already said, I will take you again in company for the few minutes which it will take me to show you the forms in which successful life manifests itself in the more open living of the man; in those actual transactions which involve him with his own principles, and implicate him with other men.

It appears first in self-knowledge. That is, every successful man will, ordinarily, be found engaged only in that for which he has been fitted by nature and by training—by inclination and by taste—so that, undertaking it cheerfully, he

will push his business on, *con amore*, and not tie his hands to it with the reluctance of a slavish task. He will have consulted congeniality of temperament, before undertaking the life-time work which is to bring bread to his table, and be the channel through which his daily thoughts are to move to receive their impress, their color, their elevation, or depression. The atmosphere, which circulates around one's occupation, ought to be the free air which entire *contentment* may breathe, and which will arterialize no blood that can be detrimental to the integrity and soundness of the inner and better life of character; and, "at the same time, that occupation should be capable of receiving upon it the whole impress of the true manhood which has adopted it, and carrying out that manhood's peculiar forces to their legitimate uses and unhindered results. The soul should demand a labor equal to itself—not above, not below, its discoverable powers. Not that every one should engage in that to which he can urge himself to *aspire*, but only to that which he may, with *propriety*, aspire: a propriety that is founded more upon his sober judgment and undiseased self-appreciation, than upon the suggestions of his imagination. Sam Weller often imagined that he ought to be something better than a boot-black—that he might even aspire to the coach-box of his successful father—but he always came to himself when the last touch of polish, upon some glittering instep, revealed his own master-touch; and went to whistling away his momentary dissatisfaction, that he might find himself once more in possession of re-assured philosophic content! Success flies not upon the wings of fancy, and is not achieved in the impossible world of fiction. It lies only at the door of the man who has made a safe and unquarrelsome acquaintance with himself, and has determined to undertake just that for which God, speaking through his nature, and up through that nature's judicious training, has inspired him with fitness for—be it to serve, or be it to govern—be it to make shoes, or to black them—be it to occupy the place of mechanical labor, or the position of professional influences—be it low down, or high up, on the thousand-ringed ladder of life.

The great book often presents the thought, that there is a voice for every man's ear—coming from Him who has a right place for each—bearing upon it a distinct call, as if *he* were specifically named from the great roll of the race, and bidding him stand, brave and unblushing, in his designated lot. And the comparison holds true, in its strictest sense, that “as a bird wandering from her nest, so is a man wandering from his place”—holds true, not only as an illustration of folly, but as a warning against defection from duty.

In addition, however, to the reasons which plead for every one's standing in his own place, as drawn from personal considerations, it must be remembered by every actor in the scenes of this world that he is not *alone*, but touches a thousand interests of *others*, who are acting upon the same grand stage; and that he, *with them*, are intended to constitute a harmonious body for fulfilling an end greater and higher than that which is merely personal to himself—an end that has the progress of humanity for its general expression, and the glory of the Universal Sovereign for its honor. That an individual, therefore, may be a true factor in the divinely ordered equations of general life—always appearing with his proper exponent, and his right co-efficient—he must know and take and preserve his appointed place. He must not always be appearing as an unknown X, whose value can be reduced to no certain expression, and whose perplexing obscurity needlessly complicates the approximations of the entire problem. Although it does seem, indeed, as if many persons in a given community answered to precisely the same digit, and counted for about the same relative value, yet this is, after all, only a *seeming*. For no man can ever be to the world exactly what another is—just as no soldier can ever fill—no more, no less—the place of a companion in battle. He will either be his inferior or superior by shades of difference, which will darken at some point the gloom of the defeat, or set off the boast of the victory. Happy the man who finds in the world his true place, where he can make every blow of his energies tell, and around which he can collect, day by day, the accumu-

lating distinctions of honorable success, and the increasing delights of sweet content.

By all this it is not, of course, meant that an occupation, once selected as the vehicle of a man's work, must never be abandoned whenever good cause shall appear for the choice of another. Neither am I to be understood as recommending contentment with mediocrity, as if every man were not bound to rise in life, as high as he, in all suitableness, can, to keep himself always on a level with his capacities, and to prevent his broadening shoulders from jostling others over much. If a man will always have his energies in good mastering order, he will be ready to storm the difficulties that lie in the way of an enlarging business, with a success that as much belongs to him as any which attended his smallest beginnings. *His* life is a comparative failure who will never obey the providences which call him out, from shell after shell of his bursting chrysalis, to put on new and better powers of personal success and general usefulness. Only let not *every* worm think that the plumage of the butterfly belongs of right to *him*.

I will pass over those indications which always go along with the true idea of success in life—such as *industry, perseverance, system, common-sense*—and glance at one or two others that are not generally reckoned among the auxiliaries of personal prosperity. There are those *c. g.* who are engaged in all the pursuits of men, who carry about with them a *chill* and a *gloom*, and seem to feel that to be earnest is to be sour, and that the assertion of a proper self-esteem is to be always made in an atmosphere of *moroseness*. Oh, the sea of life runs full of these icebergs!—and they carry upon them, I think, the debris of many a ruined personal hope, and threaten wreck to many an unsuspecting vessel, which has to anchor temporarily under their lee for a favorable wind to wing them on their escape from so cold a grave of life! At what time in his growing years has one a right given him to lay aside his heart of childhood, and to quench the fire of those eyes that danced to the twinkle of every star, when *home* was all there was under the awful blue? When is authority given to a man to

thrust away from his being, the bright angel which crept into his cradle, what time he smiled its welcome along the rippling face of sweet infancy? What a time that was when all nature won from opening childhood the incessant rattle of gleeful laughter!—when the very *rod of correction*, which was employed to keep him from spoiling, and from going altogether into the froth and bubble of careless youth, afforded him subsequent amusement, in giving him material for the manufacture of a whistle, or the erection of a cockade, or the test-wood of a new knife!—ready for a laugh as soon as the sting was over—ready to bring sunshine from many a patch of undisturbed sky to the countenance of the still revered parent, who had just obeyed the command of Solomon to his own discomposure of spirits! Oh, what man is altogether a man, who has not about him always the fresh spirit of his early days, and is not as ready as ever to obey the spring of gladness, which, though long tried, is not yet broken within his elastic heart? Oh, for the greenness of age, growing amid the greenness of youth!

There is some great element wanting in his success, I must believe, who cannot bear his business engagements and cares, upon a buoyant heart, but who has made himself an object of repulse to others by only the absence of good nature—whose integrity is high, whose history is a pattern of regularity—the nature of whose general prosperity indicates a character for much that is great and even noble—but yet who, in the social gathering, at the home fireside, in the business mart, is the hard man of no gentle smiles, and no ready cheerfulness, and no prompt heartiness! I have often thought that Mark Taply (of Dickens's Chuzzlewit) was a good instance of the success in life of sheer good humor, with nothing to support it except a transparent common-sense. He is, without designing, a pun, a capital "Mark," for those who think it "creditable to be jolly," under any circumstances, seeing that he could place himself in no situation, even among the fever and ague swamps of our Western settlements, where he could not cry shame upon himself for ever al-

lowing a thought of merit to stop the current of his good humor!

But, perhaps, it is, after all, not so wonderful, that life is thus so gloomy to many—for it may be—aye, it must be—that they have won success from fields which a kind and guardful Providence has enclosed for them, and which He has made to bud and blossom with all the good that has reached their harvest home; and yet, amid it all, has been a Providence unacknowledged.

Gentlemen, I have so endeavored to express the sentiments of this Address, that there might be seen through it all the solemn thought of a higher life than that appointed for the body—and that success in life is not obtained unless the *whole being* of man be acknowledged. There must be a *God* presiding over and through all truly successful enterprise. There must be no rejection of our *spiritual* relations, amid the multiplicity of our *material* relations. No one must ever lose sight of the fact that he is executing, not his own will, but God's; and that his highest end is always, when truly seen, seen shining amid the brightness of a *divine* glory. This will give additional assurance to the steps of worldly success. This will gild the darkest scenes of failure itself with the light of an unsetting sun. This will give peace to the mind—open joy in the heart—sow gladness along every path. It will make the merchant's ledger a posted account of blessings just begun—the lawyer's brief a reminder of the trial-scenes of the great day which will proclaim his own freedom—the physician's visit a lesson in the mighty book, of which this world's affairs are but the introduction—the farmer's ploughing a sight of that furrowed field where seeds spring up only to ripen in heaven!

I am not afraid, therefore, as a closing sentiment, to declare a truth, which has a thousand corroborations on every side of the great subject of this hour—that no success, however brilliant, can be said to realize the idea of a worthy accomplishment, or afford the satisfaction of a finished work, unless there be a daily going up to the Being of all Might, and Wisdom,

and Truth, in effective *prayer*. Failure is always dogging the darkling path of him who *knows not God as a personal friend*. Indeed, there is no truth which stands out in bolder relief than the fact of a *divine purposing* amid the multitude of *human devisings*—stands out from general history, and not less from each individual's own narrower story. The reality of the government of that great overruling One, who is tied to none of the plans of men, must be acknowledged as a philosophical unity, as well as a religious doctrine. And I do not hesitate to say, that this is precisely that reality, along the string of which every earthly undertaking must suspend its success, and in the humbler and practical acknowledgment of which there is a vast amount of wisdom. If all events must map themselves out in actual history, according to the direction they receive from the Supreme mind, what more natural, what more safe, what more blessed, than just for each one to mould his will into the sympathies and harmonics of the sovereign will! and who, in whatever situation of life, cannot thus address the awful throne of eternity:

“Thou mighty Lord, who resting high above,
With regulated errors
And with discordant union guidest heaven;
O, of the fair eternal realms of light,
Thou, Lord immutable, resplendent Power,
Thou dazler and obscurer of the sun!
Now in these weeping eyes,
And on this humid cheek,
I dry my bitter tears, I cheer my heart.
Now, by Thy zealous mercy,
Though spotted, I have safety;
Security in hazard—love in hate;
And, sinking into hell,
Am yet a citizen of heaven.”

