

## LIFE WORK.



N the western extremity of the plain of Thebes, is a mass of high limestone cliffs, cleft by two deep ravines that lead up into the very heart of the hills. The one is the valley of the tombs of the Kings—the other of the tombs of the Priests: the Westminster Abbey and Canterbury Cathedral of ancient Thebes.

Ascending one of these ravines, you enter a sculptured portal in the face of the cliff, and stand in a long and lofty gallery opening into successive halls and chambers. The walls are covered with white stucco, and this in turn is covered with paintings, in brilliant coloring, fresh as when laid on thousands of years ago. No modern palaces could be more completely ornamented; but the interest we feel in these rock-hewn chambers is enhanced by the fact that they are not palaces but tombs—the tombs of the ancient Theban kings. In the paintings upon the walls the traveller beholds not only a vivid representation of ancient Egyptian life and religion, but in some sort a history of the king himself. Each of these Theban kings began his reign by preparing his sepulchre, and in some instances the visitor passes at once from the most brilliant decorations to rough, unhewn rock. The king had died in the midst of his labor, and the grave closed over his unfinished work.

There is something analagous to this in human life. Every man is engaged, whether consciously or not, in a work that shall live after him as the monument of his virtues, his follies, or his crimes. He is building the structure in which his name and his memory shall be enshrined through the coming ages, and on which coming generations shall gaze with admiration or with scorn. Or, perhaps, instead of rearing some imperishable structure, he may, like a thoughtless child, be building houses on the sand, which the next returning wave shall sweep away. There is a wide difference in the results of different human lives. Some are splendid failures and some are splendid crimes; while others are vague and meaningless, and, so far as any healthful influence on the world is concerned, had better never have been.

There are many men who, in regard to life's great purposes, build without any definite plan. They go on, in a desultory way, adding room to room and wing to wing, and in the end there is a mere aggregation of materials without beauty or symmetry, and, it may be, unfit for any useful purpose. Most failures in life have been owing to one of two causes: either there was no definite plan by which to work, or else there was not sufficient energy to execute the design. The one class waste good materials in building unsightly and useless structures; the other class erect magnificent castles—in the air. "A man's purpose in life," says a modern writer, "should be like a river which was born of a thousand rills in the mountains; and when at last it had reached its manhood in the plain, though if you watch you shall see little eddies that seem as if they had changed their minds and were going back again to the mountains, yet all its mighty current flows changeless to the sea."