

THE CONQUEST OF OBSTACLES:
DEFIANCE OF FATE.

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BY ORISON SWETT MARSDEN.
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When God wants to educate a man, he does not send him to school to the Graces, but to the Necessities. Through the pit and the dungeon Joseph came to a throne. We are not conscious of the mighty cravings of our half-divine humanity; we are not aware of the god within us until some chasm yawns which must be filled, or till the rending asunder of our affections forces us to become conscious of a need. Paul in his Roman cell; John Huss led to the stake at Constance; Tyndale dying in his prison at Amsterdam; Milton, amid the incipient earthquake throes of revolution, teaching two little boys in Aldgate Street; David Livingstone, worn to a shadow, dying in a negro hut in Central Africa, alone—what failures they might all to themselves have seemed to be, yet what mighty purposes was God working out by their apparent humiliations!

"Stick your claws into me," said Mendelssohn to his critics when entering the Birmingham orchestra. "Don't tell me what you like but what you don't like." John Hunter said that the art of surgery would never advance until professional men had the courage to publish their failures as well as their successes. "Young men need to be taught not to expect a perfectly smooth and easy way to the objects of their endeavor or ambition," says Dr. Peabody. "Seldom does one reach a position with which he has reason to be satisfied without encountering difficulties and what might seem discouragements. But if they are properly met, they are not what they seem, and may prove to be helps, not hindrances. There is no more helpful and profiting exercise than surmounting obstacles." It is said that but for the disappointments of Dante, Florence would have had another prosper-

ous Lord Mayor, and the ten dumb centuries continued voiceless, and the ten other listening centuries (for there will be ten of them, and more) would have no Divina Commedia to hear!

It was in the Madrid jail that Cervantes wrote Don Quixote. He was so poor that he could not even get paper during the last of his writing, and had to write on scraps of leather. A rich Spaniard was asked to help him, but the rich man replied: "Heaven forbid that his necessities should be relieved; it is his poverty that makes the world rich. A constant struggle, a ceaseless battle to bring success from inhospitable surroundings, is the price of all great achievements." "She sings well," said a great musician of a promising but passionless contatrice, "but she wants something, and in that something, everything. If I were single I would court her, I would marry her; I would maltreat her; I would break her heart, and in six months she would be the greatest singer in Europe." "He has the stuff in him to make a good musician," said Beethoven of Rossini, "if he had only been well flogged when a boy; but he is spoiled by the ease with which he composes." We do our best while fighting desperately to attain what the heart covets.

Kossuth called himself "a tempest-tossed soul, whose eyes have been sharpened by affliction." Benjamin Franklin ran away, and George Law was turned out of doors. Thrown upon their own resources, they early acquired the energy and skill to overcome difficulties. As soon as young eagles can fly the old birds tumble them out and tear the down and feathers from their nest. The rude and rough experience of the eagle fits him to become the bold king of birds, fierce and expert in pursuing his prey. Boys who are bound out, crowded out, kicked out, usually "turn out," while those who do not have these disadvantages frequently fail to "come out." "It was not the victories but the defeats of my life which have strengthened me," said the aged Sidenham Poyntz. Almost from the dawn of history oppression has been the lot of the Hebrews, yet they have given the world its noblest songs, its wisest proverbs, its sweetest music. With them persecution seems to bring prosperity.

In one of the battles of the Crimea, a cannon-ball struck inside the fort, crashing