

who wields it as an instrument of good increases his own strength by the exercise; but he who seeks it as an end, and uses it merely as a staff to lean upon in life's journey, will be crippled and dwarfed by its possession. Great mental endowments may afford the best means for usefulness or for acquiring distinction in any calling; and yet, apart from that fixedness of purpose which admits of no such word as fail, they will insure no marked success. Though they may attract momentary observation by their brilliancy, they will leave no lasting results. The gifts of nature and the advantages of circumstance are by no means to be depreciated; they are high gifts, but there is one thing higher in man and that is the power which uses them and without which they are worthless.

There is no real good secured without labour. Capricious fortune may seem at times to lavish her gifts profusely with perhaps little regard to the character of recipients; yet, even in these cases, how often does she snatch them away just as unexpectedly as she bestowed them, leaving him who trusted in them much more unfitted for life's struggles than if he had never been the recipient of her favours. How often are the propitious breezes of friendly circumstance changed, as in a moment, to the tempestuous blasts of adverse fortune, and then woe to him who with unstrung nerves has drifted out upon the tide of life. It is a law in nature that the effort requisite for the acquisition of an object develops power sufficient to retain it, and he alone is fitted to retain and utilize the means of usefulness in his possession who has obtained them by his own exertions. While the general truthfulness of this principle is evident in the common transactions of life, much more strictly does it hold true in regard to mental acquirements. No rich legacies of mental wealth fall like ancestral heirlooms to the lot of man. Every gain must be a self-made purchase. Every labourer in the field of knowledge receives impartial payment. Prince and peasant stand on equal