

The insolence of office, and the spurns  
 That patient merit of the unworthy takes ?  
 \* \* \* \* \* Who would fardels bear,  
 To grunt and sweat under a weary life ?

The great dramatic poet has said it was because of "the dread of something after death—the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller returns." Is there not something beside this to be considered? The "dread of something after death" might induce men to struggle along prolonging life and shuddering to enter beyond the "bourn from whence no traveller returns." But why, if there be nothing intrinsically in human life, should men make the great struggle for the prizes of this world? Easy, indeed, would it be for most of us to drift pleasantly through the term of our existence, having enough to eat, to drink and to wear. But that is not the actual condition of the world at this moment. If we look at the human race from a vantage ground of observation, we see men engaged in a desperate conflict for wealth, power, social distinction and fame. The hot ambition of life is not alone seen in youth. The hoary veteran of sixty or seventy, who, if he were wise at all, must have felt a thousand times that life is but a span, and that the drop scene is not far off, still strains every nerve to further schemes which cannot date beyond his death-bed. He has a speculation in which his sole interest is fortune. He is in the political whirl, and he clings to office as if all depended upon it, or he struggles to gain it with every power he possesses. Rest, ease, comfort, home, friends are forgotten in the surging conflict for preferment. Is it for the cause he struggles? Perhaps; but who shall say how much of the purely personal enters into the account—how far the goal of those tireless efforts is the plaudits of an admiring multitude who acclaim his triumph? The events of every day reveal the undying weakness of human nature. An old gentleman has been

fairly successful in life, and gathered about him sufficient of the world's goods to provide in comfort for himself and those dependent on his care. He is surrounded by his family and has all the enjoyments of home. The dreams of youth have all long since vanished, and he knows that but a few years at most remain, while the uncertainties of life make it likely that he may pass away at any moment. Some day a delegation of his neighbors tender him a nomination for a high office. The acceptance of the trust means labor, toil and anxiety to attain the office, and the assumption of its duties means unceasing worry and perplexing care. But how rarely is the call declined? Home, rest, reflection, the moments for lifting the soul to the plane of that tremendous transition to another life are all put aside, and the gray hairs, and, perchance, enfeebled form, are found hastening from point to point, urging, struggling, surging toward victory. Why? Perhaps it is the call to Cincinnatus to save the country. Perhaps this is the mere phantom—the pleasant illusion to tickle the imagination of the multitude. At bottom, the chief motive will be found to be the restless and undying impulses of pride and ambition. These have not their roots in a cold and cynical philosophy, but in the unconscious instincts, implanted by a benign providence to lift men out of themselves and out of the horrors which would flow from a too minute introspection, and push them or lure them along into the engrossing sphere of action, where one has not time to stop and take a straight look into the future. Shakespeare's philosophy will have to be revised. It is not alone the "dread of something after death" that contents a world of busy men to "fardels bear, and grunt and sweat under a weary life." It is the inborn impulses of pride, lighted and guided by the bright phantoms of hope that lure men into the sphere of action, where the voice of reflection is too feeble to