

A consultation of medical men from the adjoining towns, after sounding my lungs under a stethoscope, decided that one lung was partially gone, and the other badly diseased, and that there was little if any prospect that I could survive more than a year, if that long.

The additional kindly advice of my own confidential physician, that I had better settle up and set in order my business affairs while I possessed the necessary strength and mental energy, was anything but reassuring that my future achievements in literature and science, to which I had looked forward with such glowing hopes and ambitious aspirations, would ever be realized.

But as was my wont from childhood up, I resolved not to surrender, even to what seemed to be the inevitable, but with a desperation, which I have no language to describe, I determined to seek some way out of that tangled wilderness of circumstances which had hemmed me in and chained my limbs as in a net-work of steel wire.

I did not believe that it were possible for Providence to design and permit my death at that early age with the life-work before me which so plainly I foresaw in the distant future.

I did not believe in the miraculous aspect of special providences so commonly and thoughtlessly entertained by religious philosophers, but I did believe in semi-inspirations which God somehow permits in great emergencies to come upon men when under the most intensified conditions.

Besides, I saw that my physical condition which had so summarily laid me at death's door, was mostly my own fault though resulting from over-zeal and ambitious efforts in what I regarded as a good cause, and therefore it was now my duty as well as my triumph to retrieve the sin I had unwittingly committed against nature's laws, if it were still in my power to do so, and thus make my own sufferings redound to the future blessing of the race.