

a mean and sordid determination to amass more money than our neighbour. By-and-by we awake to a knowledge of our selfishness—our eager laying up of wealth for ourselves and families—halt in the great battle for precedence, and cast our eyes around on the misery of the world at our feet. We realize that our money may be more profitable—in the eyes of our higher being and of God—used in helping others than in accumulating for the next generation, and are saved before it is too late.

But what does the world say? "I thought Mr. So-and-so was on a fair road to success. Had he continued as he was doing he might have bought an estate and founded a family. But he is a comparative failure after all." Failure! Do we feel that we have failed? In our awakened eyes, that turning point saved us from failure.

Every man knows on his deathbed, if he has time to think, whether his life has or has not been a failure. It is then we see things in their true light. 'Our true aims stand out with startling clearness, and in a different dress from the one we have been accustomed to see. Ruskin says: "There is only one place where a man may be nobly thoughtless—his deathbed. No thinking should ever be left to be done there." Happy are we if it be so with us, and if in our last hours we can feel that our lives have not been uselessly wasted on the perishable things of this world, but that someone, at least, has been the better for our little time on earth.

Why should poverty be bracketed with failure and wealth with success? That it is so almost invariably everyone will admit. Your neighbour dies, and his vast fortune is noted in your daily newspapers. "What a successful man Mr. H—has been!" you hear echoed on all sides. You yourself say it. If you had looked on his miserable death, heard his groans of remorse, his agonized fear, his cries to an unknown God for forgiveness which he would not accept, successful would have been the last word you would have applied to him. Where success in life does not also mean success in death, it is a poor tri-

umph. Mr. L.—in the next street dies. His is a plain and modest funeral, few carriages follow the hearse, and its burden is laid to rest with little pomp or ceremony. This time we hear it said, "Poor L—, his life has been rather a failure," or "Did you see how much L— had left? Not much after a life of hard work, as he seems to have had, poor man!" Yes, you pity him, pity the man who died with a smile on his face, who humbly felt that his time was come, and that he was ready to go. Do not waste your compassion on those who need it not! Go into the dwellings of the poor, hear their sighs over the death of their benefactor, and their praise of him who gave their children food when they would have died of hunger. Pity them if you will, but do not pity L—, who has gone to reap the reward of his self-denying life, and to a land where money has no influence and worldly position is of no account.

Let us trace failure to the beginning.

Of what vital importance to our lives are the thoughts which pass through our mind! Time was when I used to comfort myself with the idea that my thoughts, at least, need not be controlled; as long as my actions were good, my inward meditations might take what form they pleased. But our thoughts will not long be unbetraysed by our actions. A low thought once entertained will return to be entertained again, and the second time your mind will all the more readily receive it. No man yet did a mean action without having *nearly* done it several times before. The first sin committed is by no means the first offence. The mind must be prepared by a long and hardening process before it will influence the body to perform one base action. A man once said to another, "I do things now that in my younger days would have blushed merely to *think of*." What a gradual descent we see marked out there. The natural shrinking overcome in thought the frequent recurrence of the mind to the lower line of thought, until by-and-by the doing comes almost as a lawful sequence. There is no very hard line of demarcation anywhere

although outsiders see the action alone.

With the ambition for worldly eminence and fame, which so often ruins a man spiritually, and in itself brings so little real satisfaction, it is difficult to deal. The innate love of praise which is born in us, and which all possess in a more or less marked degree, we cannot ignore. The child's first step alone is taken to please the mother and hear her word of delighted praise. It is through this very quality we train our children. We praise them when they do right, and blame them when they do wrong; thus teaching them that praise is a good thing, and to be desired. What we have to do, then, is to train our minds to discriminate, to strive after the good opinion of just, God-fearing men, and eschew the idle, and oftentimes hypocritical, praise of the worldly-minded, which will last only as long as fortune smiles on us.

All failure is comparative.

If our aims are low we shall not be dissatisfied with a life that attains to little. I once heard a man say: "I do not know what failure means. I am quite pleased with myself and my life." That may be, I thought, but you are not to be envied. I did not know the man, but I conjectured, from the sentiment there expressed, that his mind was narrow and worldly, that what he had done had been done for himself alone and to enrich his worldly position. It is a poor sign to be fully satisfied with ourselves. One has said: "Those who are quite satisfied sit still and do nothing; those who are not quite satisfied are the benefactors of the world." The best and noblest men who have lived have had their times of deep depression, when life seemed little better than a failure, and when they have groaned in secret, "O God, how little have I done!" Yet their lives have been one grand path of beauty to the eyes of others. The man who does the most is generally the man who falls furthest short of his own ideal; the world sees what we have done, not what we meant to do, and we are poor creatures indeed if, in our lives here on earth, we have done all we wished.