

man quenchless and imperishable, burning for ever, illumining new spheres of thought and action, potent for good, or—dread thought—far more potent for evil; evil for a time only it may be, but still evil, and therefore corrupting and debasing. The good eventually will triumph—must triumph; for, behold everything is very good. But evil will have its reign. It must be banished by the good, the great work of the spirit of right and truth.

But whatever field you choose wherein to labour, have ever before you a lofty ideal. Though you should never attain it, yet never lose sight of it. It will be your animating principle in life, your consolation in sorrow, your mentor and disciplinarian in success. Nay, more, it will make you resigned in failure. It will teach you modesty in success. And success will come. It is certain as the Truth, faithful to its mission as the needle to its pole. Men may never know it. Not the most popular or the most notorious are the most successful; but your own soul will know it. Your own soul, God's soul that speaks in you. I do not use the term God in its limited sense, that undefined, sometimes monstrously distorted conception which fastens like a disease upon the minds of men. I mean the all-embracing, all-absorbing conception of loftiest being and perfection of purpose and accomplishment and its author, whatever and wherever that may be; self-existent, creative, preservative, perpetuating, progressive, ever moving, and ever moving to the light, and because light, truth, and quenchless.

And what are to be your ministers of the ideal? What is to feed the fire of aspiration? I answer, unhesitatingly, books. Why not men? Because men are our contemporaries, and, strange perversity in human nature, we are apt to disparage, nay,

sometimes despise contemporaries. They are so near to ourselves, so real, so equal. But the dead speak with more eloquent tongues, with a voice, indeed, not of earth, for their spirits have long passed the boundary line of earth and time, and to us are among the immortals, and are therefore in a sense loftier, wiser, holier than ourselves. A good book is in very deed a man's soul in symbols, thereby is conserved the true man. What was dross and dust has become transmuted, but what was light and spirit remains embalmed in letters. And again, with the living man is associated error as well as wisdom, littleness as well as greatness, vice as well as virtue. We, as a rule, see the best of a man in a book, that is, if it be the kind of book I mean. We do not always see the best of a man in real life. Alas! poor humanity. How weak we all are! How our idols are shattered! What weary pilgrimages do we all at times make to the shrines of our inner consciences, scourging ourselves with the knotted cords of self-contrition, and crawling painfully back on bleeding knees to the life of renewed endeavour! Here is a man we thought a god, and some day the veil is transiently blown aside as by a chance breath, and we see something that startles, that disappoints us. Behind the curtain we catch a glimpse of the trickery of the stage. There stands Statecraft, a becurled and pomatumed charlatan, and here poses the Patriot, the sponsor to an alien race, the truckler to an assassin's knife. There are ever the meaner offices of life connected with the man. We cannot disassociate the one from the other. But memory is white light, untainted by the dust of envy, undimmed by the whirlwind of passion. By its means we can weigh, reject, condone, approve, assimilate to ourselves all that is worth assimilating, and forgive and forget the rest. This