



Old Time's great clock, that never stops,  
Nor runs too fast nor slow,  
Kings up amid the world of age,  
Where wisdom's footsteps glow,  
Its dial-paint the orbit warms—  
Where whirls our mortal sphere—  
Has pushed its pointer round again,  
And struck another year.

—Longfellow.

WILL that fact bring satisfaction or regret, I wonder, to the majority of my readers? To the very young there will be little sense of responsibility, incurred by the moving on of the hands on Old Time's great clock, but to those of more mature minds there will surely come a consciousness of the gravity of the occasion of the New Year, which, whether we will or not, we must now face. We are looking two ways; backward over the past, forward to the future. The past is beyond recall, the future is not yet ours. Only the present is within our reach, and while to-day is the goal of yesterday it is the starting point of to-morrow. We are here. The road by which we came may not have been pleasant or easy, but it has terminated in to-day. We are going hence. Whether we shall go much farther on the pilgrim way of human life, none of us can tell. With many there shall be no earthly to-morrow for them as to us all some time, to-day comes as the last day of probationary experience.

What then shall be our attitude to life? One of stolid indifference as the hours pass by, or one of hopeful and persistent endeavor as the days roll on? Surely not the former if we have regard to the best things. We may not have accumulated much of value to show for the work of the past. Our days have possibly dragged wearily by in the humdrum discharge of daily duty; we may have seemingly toiled without apparent fruit; life may have been a ceaseless round of care; there may have been little of joy and much of misery; but happy is he who despite all this, can and will cheerfully and bravely face the future singing the old refrain, "To-morrow the sun will be shining, although it is cloudy to-day." It is only by nourishing such hope for to-morrow by faithfulness in the common round of duties to-day that we can maintain ourselves in a frame of mind best conducive to happiness and abiding peace.

It is positively useless to spend time repenting over the past. The record is written, and the good or evil, it is irradicable. But he who would be wise will profit by the mistakes he has made, and will prevent their recurrence by watchfulness over the minutes as they pass, and by patient industry in improving the hours as they surely grow into days. We may all have more or less reason to be dissatisfied with ourselves, we certainly have abundant reason for being unsatisfied with our attainments. What then? Simply press on and do one's best. There is a miserliness that is despicable, but there is a miserliness that is commendable. Value time most highly. Utilize the tiny moments, and the hours will accumulate a wondrous store of real wealth. Napoleon is said to have boasted in the same conversation that he had never lost an hour. Those who have achieved most have been the most scrupulously devoted to the im-

provement of the passing opportunity. And there is no better way.

Therefore keep busy. The worst waste of today is not that of money, of which we hear much, but of time, of which we hear less, but of time, of which we might hear far more. Do not squander time for that's the stuff life is made of, was good advice when first given long ago, and is timely counsel still. I would not make life a drudgery to anyone, but would fill it with heart-light-ness and joy; to everyone; but I think I am well within the mark in saying that the average young person of this age does not take kindly to hard work. In that perhaps, he is no more to blame than were his fathers before him. Youth has always preferred a smooth road, and to seek for objects of value as easily and quickly as possible, has always been characteristic of humanity. Late, often too late to amend the past or retrieve the lost opportunity, the man is rudely awakened and with vain regrets sighs, "If I had life to go over again I would do differently." Perhaps he would, but more likely not, for youth is both short-sighted and self-willed, and is ever loath to profit by experience and advice. I hardly expect, therefore, that all my young readers will accept as wise and sagacious the counsel here given; but notwithstanding this, I know of no more beneficial admonition to give them than that contained in the two simple words, "keep busy."

The ability to apply one's self that details are mastered and the task in hand accomplished with credit, is not easily attained, and yet it may be acquired. It is superior to genius. In fact, it is not the very highest form of genius? Daniel Webster once said, "I know of no superior quality than I possess, unless it be the power of application. To work and not to genius I owe my success." And it is significant that the most renowned men of mark in all avenues of human accomplishment, have given some such testimony. Every young man might profit by the suggestive statements of Sir Walter Scott, who wrote in a letter to his son, "I cannot too much impress on your mind that labor is the condition which God has imposed on us in every day of our lives. There is nothing without labor that can be had without it. As for knowledge, it can no more be planted in the human mind without labor than a field of wheat can be produced without the previous use of the plow." Let the clever youth beware of the popular fallacy that the things that profit most, the essentials to a well rounded and symmetrical character, may be cheaply acquired or hurriedly obtained. The devil is well satisfied when he instills such poison into the mind, for he knows that thousands are peopled with millions who have lost their lives by procrastination and foolish neglect.

Idleness means loss. And more, it invites disaster to both the idler and his fellows. The old saw, "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," is more true than popular, and thousands have experienced its reality. The only safeguard for the young Christian, is to be continually employed about his Father's business. The foolish fancies of the indolent and self-indulgent youth who looks for some fabled road

that leads easily and quickly to the summit of human achievement, are soon dissipated by the rude, pitiless facts of actual life as the years pass by; but better were it that he were early wise, and profit by the knowledge gained by those who have preceded him in the inevitable hardship of life's struggle and competition, than the way he would emphasize the injunction, "Keep busy." You may be naturally talented, others may complement you on your gifts and predispose you to pride yourself on the quickness with which you pick up anything you desire, but unless you are steadily employed, and earnestly devoted to the task in hand, the best achievement will be denied you. Charles Dickens was counted a man of remarkable natural ability, and rightly so, and yet he had to do; and whatever I have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself to completely. In great aims and in small I have never been thoroughly in earnest. I have never believed it possible that any natural or improved ability could claim immunity from the companionship of the steady, hardworking qualities, and hope to gain its end." These qualities of steady application and willingness to work hard are acquired and come by no other way, as the result of determination to compel success whatever the cost to self-aim may be.

Not the less striking are the words of Sir Joshua Reynolds. "Those who are resolved to excel must go to their work, rising or unwilling, morning, noon, and night. They will find it no play but very hard work." But hard though it be, from such heroic spirits nothing can be withheld, for, as Beethoven truly said, "The barriers are not erected which apply to aspiring talents and industry, thus far and no farther." There is inspiration in such a statement and every youth should feel its uplift and be strengthened to redoubled effort by the assurance it contains. The average lad and girl may have abundant opportunity. Facilities are provided for him that afford all possible privilege, and if he will but apply himself he may add another testimony to the thousands that combine to prove the truthfulness of Dr. John Kitto when he bluntly said, "I think that all the fine stories about natural ability, etc., etc. are mere rigmors, and that every man may, according to his opportunities and industry, render himself almost anything he wishes to become." In the spirit of this noble man who achieved so much in the face of obstacles that many would have counted insuperable, let all my readers join with me in the resolve that in the coming year, whose dawning we hail with hope and good cheer, we will intelligently, consistently, prayerfully apply ourselves to the work before us as we never have in past days. So shall we realize more of the possibilities of Christian character within us, and accomplish more of Christian service without us, among our fellow-men. And when Old Father Time counts off for us our last year and his inexorable pointer marks the closing hour of our earthly life, we shall simply pass to the Land where abundance and fullness of life that never grows old nor knows decay.

"It was not in his nature to be superlative in anything; useless, indeed, he was superlative in middle, the quintessential extract of mediocrity." This expression occurs in George Eliot's analysis of the character of Rev. Amos Barton, curate of Shepperton Church. Is it not appropriate of many still, not only in the ranks of the professional ministry, but among all men everywhere? It may be possible for but few to occupy superior

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