

### THE KICKER'S DEATH.

A brother died, so the story goes,  
And went from the earth away,  
Far off where the violet and the rose,  
And the dashing Johnny-jump-up grows,  
And the earth-worm worms of the dust repose,  
Till the coming of Judgment Day.

The brother looked on that sleeping throng,  
All dressed in their robes of white,  
And did not discover, as he jogged along,  
Chanting the strains of a tuneful song,  
A single kicker, good and strong,  
In the regions of endless night.

And he asked of the angel who led him on,  
"How is it," he said, said he,  
"That amid the millions of lost and gone  
I do not discover a single one,  
Who was a vigorous kicker at home,  
While waiting to cross the sea?"

And the angel answered, "You are quite aware  
That oil and water won't mix,  
And every brother who kicked down there,  
And would not act upon the square,  
Are all, every one of them, hide and hair,  
Ingulfed in the river Styx.

"Down deep in the waters, neck and chin,  
They struggle to get a breath,  
They struggle and choke as the waves roll in,  
Held down by the weight of the kicker's sin,  
Not even a moment of rest to win—  
And this is the kicker's death."

### AIMLESSNESS.\*

In presenting a few thoughts to you upon the above subject, there are two things standing out prominently before my mind: the one is the desirability of having definite aims in life, the other is the great difference in value of the different objects one may so have in view.

As illustrating the first of these points, I see before me two pictures from country life. The one is that of a man, in the full vigor of life, taking a stroll through the woods without any particular destination. He goes slowly; he is attracted first by something novel on one side, then by something beautiful on the other, occasionally stopping to take in more effectively the grandeur of the scenery. At the end of an hour, we find that a few yards would represent the distance he has placed between himself and the point at which he started.

The other picture is that of the same man. He is aroused in the middle of the night; one of his little children has been taken suddenly, dangerously ill. He hastily dons a few garments and starts for the nearest physician. Now we see him on the highway, straining every nerve to make progress, nothing so novel or so beautiful as to be able to attract his attention now. Be the scenery ever so grand it cannot tempt him even to falter; all his thoughts are of the little sufferer at home, and every thought seems to add strength to his limbs and tenacity to his purpose. Now, could we measure the distance traversed by the man, under these conditions, in one hour, we would find it to be miles instead of yards.

In the first of these cases we have exemplified the title of this paper, "Aimlessness;" in the other, that which we desire to show the value of, that is, fixedness of purpose. For I take it, that the fact of the man's child being sick and requiring the doctor, only gave the motive, the reason for the progress made being that each

step was made with a will, and all were made in the same direction.

Now, if we apply the lessons here taught to other phases of life, we will find them of universal application. Let a man decide that an increase in his physical powers, and an improvement in his general health, would not only add years to his life, but would give increased enjoyment to every action; with this idea before him, let him take regular exercise, study his system, eat moderately and correctly, go into no excesses, and then, at the end of a year, let him compare himself with what he was at the beginning, and I venture to say that he will be amazed at the progress he has made in that direction.

Or let him become fired with an ambition to obtain useful information and increase his mental powers, let him read proper books, attend lectures, study, take time for meditation, cultivate concentration and consecutiveness of thought, and I predict that, be he ever so poorly equipped naturally, he will in a short time find open before him avenues of interest and power that he had never before dreamed of. I could tire you taking you through the history of different countries, picking out great men in each, and showing how largely this fixedness of purpose contributed to their success. You might suggest that perhaps they had special advantages, but facts do not bear this out, for we find that in many cases it was through special difficulties, and not on account of special opportunities that they made their progress. Just two illustrations of this: Demosthenes, of Athens, seeing that the only possible way of averting the fall of his country was by rousing the people to action, and believing that the most effective way to reach and influence men was by the power of speech, determined to be a speaker. So far from being naturally endowed in this way, we find he had an impediment in his speech to contend against. However, he devoted himself to the study of rhetoric and elocution. He labored triumphantly against the physical hindrance, and we need only say here that he eventually became the greatest orator of his day.

James A. Garfield's life has properly been entitled, "From Log Cabin to White House." Left in very early life without a father, we find him at eight years of age, compelled to help his mother to run a small farm in the wilderness. Do we read that his being surrounded by poverty discouraged him? Did he say, I have no chance; circumstances are against me; I can never rise. It does not appear so. Without any particular position of distinction before him, he determined to make the best use of his time. Every leisure moment was given to reading and study. Too poor to buy many books, he borrowed every useful book in the neighborhood and read it. Later on we find him occupying various positions in life, but in all of them he exercised the same consistent, upward pressure. The result was that at thirty he was a member of the Legislature, at thirty-three in Congress, and before his fiftieth birthday he was President of the United States.

But it was not with any idea of inducing you to try to become like some one else that I have written these lines; it was, if possible, to impress you, to impress myself, with the great importance of making the very best of ourselves. I think

aimlessness is far too prevalent. I find it in myself. I find it in you. I am surrounded with men every day, in every walk of life, who have talents, some ten, some five, some less, but all are hidden away, and the man seems to have no time for anything but to take his little part in the hurry and skurry for a living.

I said at the outset that one part of this subject was the great difference in value of the different aims we may have. I now say, if fixedness of purpose will accomplish so much, how important it is that it be used in a proper direction, and that we have objects in life that are worth working for.

If you would test yourself as to what you are doing and what your objects are, I would suggest that you look back over your life, say, for the past year, and consider what you have accomplished. A mechanic who could not point to something tangible for a year's work, would not be considered a great success as such, and surely our lifework is not of such a vague and indefinite sort that it cannot be pointed out and its merits or demerits discussed.

Some are satisfied if they find, on taking stock, that business has prospered, and that they are better off, financially, than they were; but I say a man is easily satisfied, and has a very low idea of the purpose of living, if he is willing to trade the years of his life for an increased bank account. For it is a terribly false idea to suppose that increased wealth means even increased pleasure. It does not give health, as it is apt to lead to a way of living that will impair it. It does not give true friends, for true friends that would stay by you in time of trouble and adversity, become shy as you get better off than they, and their places are often taken by false ones, who are attracted by your riches, and cannot be depended on. But we are not so deceived. As Odd Fellows, we have been taught that our duty here is of a twofold character. In the first place, we must cultivate pure minds and true hearts, that we may reflect the image of our Creator, and in the second place we must see that the spirit of fraternity permeates all our relations and actions towards our fellow-men.

I will not enlarge upon the first of these duties further than to say that in every man's heart there is an inherent desire to do those things which shall be esteemed noble and heroic, and while such deeds may be connected in some minds with life on the battlefield or in other public service, yet a very little consideration other than the most superficial will convince you that true heroism is found in humble walks of life, where the battles are for the suppression of evil passions and selfishness. To quote the words of Solomon, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

With the second division of our obligations, I wish to speak at more length. As an Order, as lodges, as individuals or units of the great brotherhood of man, are we doing our best to alleviate the suffering, and ameliorate the condition of the human race. What word is used more frequently in our lodge-rooms than the word "brother," and what word could we use that would express more? Shall we join ourselves with other secret societies in allowing ourselves to become so schooled

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