

has before him an ideal one degree beyond the possible—a shadow that fleeth before him at his near approach, the better part of every ideal being hidden in the "voiceless silence of the heart." Yet without this stimulating influence, this energy of ambition, the world would never reach any degree of excellence, or rightly feel what it might become.

Everyone knows from personal experience, as well as from the history of other lives, that "what shone afar so grand" may "turn to ashes in our hand." This is a knowledge very bitter—if salutary; and it is well for those in such a case to remember that

"The virtue lies
In the struggle—not the prize."

Coleridge and Shelley, poets of the same romantic school, each possessing marvelous gifts of genius and imagination, were nevertheless visionary rhapsodists. They build beautiful air-castles only to crumble into ruins; they launch imaginary skiffs bent upon the success of some air-built fancy, but e'er their mission is accomplished the light barque is wrecked; they view the ideal, but never possess it; they place, but fail to execute; they dream, but accomplish nothing; because before their mental concepts had taken the form of ideals, dark shadows had thrown themselves athwart their pathway, the connecting thread had snapped asunder, the light within had gone out, leaving the life an unfinished tale—broken and incomplete.

But it is through repeated failures that great deeds are accomplished. No effort put forth earnestly for the right can ever be totally vain. If to-day no ripened sheaves are garnered in, some one in the vast to-morrow shall reap a golden harvest. With the majority of men, there is no royal road to success. Seldom is it attained but by laborious effort. But there are some fortunate few, who, entering into the labor of others, share in their knowledge and appropriate their success.

Such an one was George Stephenson, the perfecter of the locomotive. Coming after men who had spent lives of patient, plodding toil in the work without having achieved the end they had in view, he gathered together the data which the broken thread of their lives had left entangled, and, aided by his

own genius, trod the road which led right upward to the goal of his success.

"Fail, yet rejoice because no less;
Thy failure, that makes thy distress,
May teach another full success."

It is hard to fail. It is hard at the end of life to look back and say: "What I have striven to accomplish is yet unaccomplished. I have worked, but my work is still unfinished, and I must die." Such a life, though full of failures, cannot in itself be a failure, if its object has been high. Full of mental discipline, the man himself must come out of such a life a grander man and more in the image of God, though he looks back upon unfulfilled visions.

"There is something noble in failure; there is discipline in it, to love what is great, to try to reach it, and yet—to fail." The very fact of failure pre-supposes effort; better to stumble on the mountain's slippery height than tread the marshy land with even footsteps; better the unattainable ideal, than a life so satisfied with earth that the veil that hides the real from the ideal, the seen from the unseen, be never lifted; better to fix the eye upon the topmost pinnacle of fame, incomprehensible though it appear, than never have an aspiration good enough to be called a failure. "Were defeat unknown, neither would victory be celebrated by songs of triumph."

Through all the years of his wanderings in the wilderness with the children of Israel, Moses had ever before him the promised joy of entering the land of Canaan, that flowed with milk and honey. It had been to him a powerful incentive in pursuing a weary march; it had made his step more sure, and unconsciously influenced him when his spirit flagged, and his heart forgot its song, by reason of the murmurings of the people.

And yet, when the journey was ended, the blue line of mountain peak just in view, when together they were about to enter within the gates into the city—he, who had been their leader, their faithful friend, obedient to the Master's voice, which bid him enter not, ascended alone Mount Nebo's giddy height—his toil over, his pilgrimage done.

But he lay down to die a nobler man for the persistency with which he had followed his ideal; satisfied enough to yield it up unrealized, as he viewed with eyes super-