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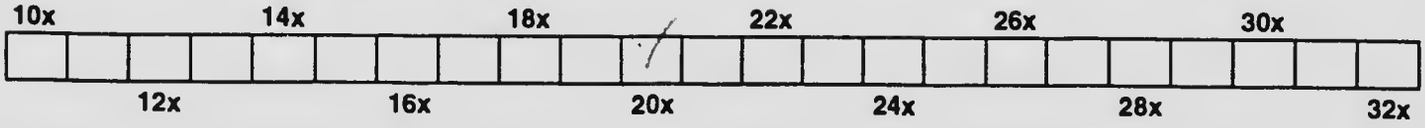

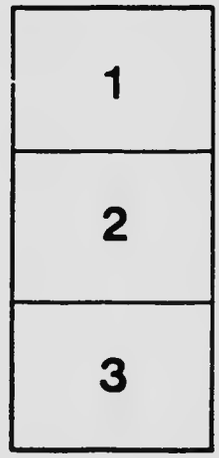

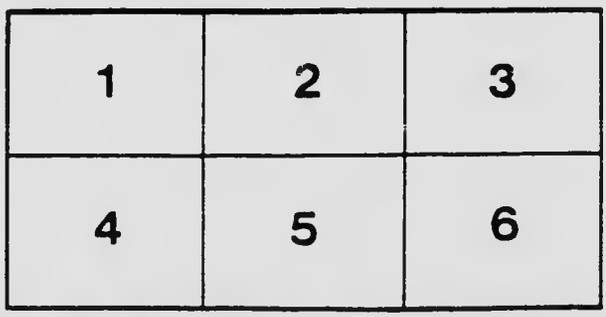

Climbing the Ladder

R. G. STRATHIE

CLIMBING THE LADDER

CLIMBING THE LADDER

BY REV. R. G. STRATHIE

We have not wings, we can not soar;
But we have feet to scale and climb
By slow degrees, by more and more,
The cloudy summits of our time.

Charlottetown
PRINTED AT THE SUNNYSIDE PRESS
1912

Dedicated

TO

THE YOUNG PEOPLE OF ZION CHURCH

CHARLOTTETOWN

CLIMBING THE LADDER

I am to speak about a l[illegible]nd the effort one makes to get to the top of it. [illegible]w a ladder is a very prosaic thing for a man to spend an hour lecturing about. It is not of especial note in literature, and there is but little beauty about it that it should commend itself to art. It consists merely of two long side pieces, with connecting rods or rungs at convenient definite intervals. Most prosaic surely! But the valuable thing about a ladder is its utility. By its means a man quickly rises from one level to another level, from one height to another height, from one floor to another. And however much he may despise this humble article because of its homeliness, yet is one sure to esteem it because of its usefulness.

Life was [illegible]ot always as secure and as complex as it is to-day. [illegible] a far gone age, we are told, life was a comparatively simple thing, and just as precarious as it was simple. The shelter of a rock served our earliest forefathers for a home, and if they could put that shelter up the side of some precipitous cliff, would it not remove the lurking danger that came from prowling lion or other equally ferocious beast? But the man himself, with a sagacity that already marks him out

from a beast, notes that a near-by tree will give him access to his exalted cave-habitation, and it is probable that the first ladder, away back in the early dawning of intelligence, was nothing more than the tangled, interlacing limbs of some spreading tree. Behold in this kindly tree, then, the front-door steps that led up to your primitive cave-dwelling forefather's rocky home, and ushered him in to security and—shall we say—comfort.

What are brains for but to use, and what are ideas for but to suggest? And so it quickly came—how quickly I do not know; probably in the course of a few thousand years—it quickly came, I say, that these cave-dwellers made ladders for themselves and their convenience where no obliging tree rendered its friendly aid. This is a mark of man's progress, a great forward step taken, when man adapted the tree principle without the actual presence of the tree, taking advantage of the numberless cases when trees were not available, and for ever making himself independent of trees. Henceforward his ideas become man's main asset, a far greater asset than his physical strength; and he can match the might of the mastodon with the cunning of a man. He is a thinker, a planner, a dreamer—in very truth a child of God.

So now we see ladders used everywhere. There are the rope ladders that lead up the rigging of a ship, and the iron ladders that reach down into her hold. There are the wooden ladders that lead to your loft, and the steep barn ladders that lead to your haymow. There are the step ladders that help you hang your pictures, and the porter's ladders in the sleeping car

that help you climb into your berth. In short, whenever you want to reach an upper level, whenever you realize heights to which you have not attained, whenever you seek to overcome Nature's precipitous barrier, put there to try your mettle and draw out your perseverance, whenever you start to climb, then you have recourse to the ladder or to the ladder principle.

Now just as soon as we pass from the simple stage of life, so do we pass from the simple stage of thought, and as a man's ability to think out complex problems develops, so also his language loses its simplicity and begins to take on those figurative aspects that make it the instrument of cultured thought. You will not wonder therefore, if I make use of this word ladder in a metaphorical sense. It is not of that material thing of uprights and cross-bars that I wish to speak, but of those other less tangible and less homely ladders that enable a man to rise in thought, in knowledge, in wealth, in influence, in service, in society, in politics. We do not ever remain what we were when we were born. For one thing, time bears us along on its broad bosom, and makes its own changes on stature, on feature, on character. But other than these unavoidable changes which are the gift of time, there are certain very real and very definite changes that proceed from our own attitude to life, the modifications or excrescences of our own activity. We take a certain view of life, and we work upon the conditionss that obtain in our neighborhood, we plan and toil, with the result that in the course of years we become different men from what we otherwise would have been. We occupy, e. g., a different station in life from what

we otherwise would have occupied; we possess a different character from what we otherwise would have possessed: we have been climbing the ladder. Our ambitions have made us endeavor to reach a higher level of living. Our ideals have made us dissatisfied with a low attainment, and we start up with our eye upon the motto "Excelsior." And thus we are always trying to do something, and we are making every year contribute its quota towards exalting us into what we hope to become.

It is in this sense that I speak to-night of climbing the ladder. I wish to carry you with me in thought as we study together the meaning of success. Ladders lead into dangers as well as into delights, and sometimes their dizzy heights are uncomfortable resting places. It is pitiable to have put forth a lifetime of effort and then to find that the effort has been worse than wasted. Wise were it at the beginning to find out where best to climb and how best to succeed.

For at the outset it is very evident that this business—shall I not say this life-work?—of climbing the ladder means the expenditure of great effort. And the higher you go the more effort it costs. You may run up half a dozen rungs with but a single breath, but should you continue on, your breath is apt to come in gasps. It is the easiest of possible things to make a mere living. To make a good living is harder. To make the best kind of a living is hard enough to tax the strength of one possessing more than a spark of divinity. There should be no place in life for the lazy man. Nature tells us this, for she smiles in appreciation at efforts made to cultivate her acquaintance, and

showers her fruits into the lap of the industrious husbandman. Nature can be merciful even to the drone, and with the hope of inciting to activity she will give her sour fruit and her stunted grain to any who will pluck them. But when you toil with her and for her, then her sourness is changed to sweetness, and her reserve into bounty. So labor is life's law, and you ignore its behests at your own peril. The best things always cost the most effort. Nowadays, with our luxurious tastes, we are substituting elevators for ladders. It is easier and quicker. But without the toil—the toil, mark you—of Faraday and Edison and others of their kind, you would never have had the elevator. And as they have toiled to help you they expect you to toil to help others.

Nor is this toil for a little while only: it is a continuous climb. Every time you see a higher level and desire to join the happy throng that sojourn there, you must get your ladder and mount it step by step, perhaps painfully and slowly. Said Mike to Pat, "Pat, what is the greatest conundrum in the world?" "Dunno," said Pat. "Life is," replied Mike, "because we all have to give it up." "I'll not give it up," said Pat. "But you must," said Mike. "I'll not give it up," said Pat, "I'll die first." We commend Pat's loyalty to the spirit of perseverance without casting any special reflection upon his insight. It is men who will stick to their tasks, even when their tasks cease to be pleasant, popular or easy, whom the world waits for, and whom the world acclaims as its greatest benefactors—after they are dead. Ladders were made to climb, and climbing means effort. No work is harder;

no work more taxes the heart action, and the lung action, and the muscle action; no work needs steadier head and more absolute control of every nerve. The man who is afraid of toil will never start to climb the ladder. The temple of fame contains the name of no man who was not willing to become a worker.

I take it, then, right here at the start, that the man whom we count truly successful must be a hard worker. We omit all such uncertain elements as luck. To be born with a silver spoon, to be an earl's son, to stumble across a gold mine, to marry an heiress—all these things count for nothing in our study. We rule out those who are born great as well as those who have greatness thrust upon them, and include only those who, by the expenditure of their own effort, achieve greatness. A man may work with his hands, a man may work with his brains—and shall we not even say that a man may work with his heart?—but work he must, and work hard, else we thrust him outside the scope of our study to-night.

But not every man who works hard wins our approbation. There is a qualifying word needed. Some of the greatest schemers in the world have been its hardest workers. And if we at all call them successful, it is only to affirm that they have been successful in villainy. Their work has detracted from the sum of the world's happiness, has destroyed a portion of the world's goodness, and has disturbed the equilibrium of the world's progress. The fewer men of that class we have, the better will it be. So that something more than effort is needed. Shall we not put in that little adjective worthy, and say that the work must

be worthy? And if the qualification be vague at present, it perhaps may become clearer as we proceed. But we have established much if only we make it clearly evident that ethical values count in our estimation of rewards And whatever may be said of the lower aspects of nature, I hold that when we come to man, we come to a sphere where what we call love and sympathy must be considered. There are those who tell us that Nature knows no moral distinctions; that in nature there is but one great scramble for life, selfish and cruel, where, the strongest emerge on the top and the weakest are thrust down to death. And this aspect of the lower life, Tennyson has immortalized in one of the cantos of his "In Memoriam."

"'So careful of the type?" but no.
From scarped cliff and quarried stone
She cries, 'A thousand types are gone:
I care for nothing, all shall go.

"'Thou makest thine appeal to me:
I bring to life, I bring to death:
The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more!'"

This is Nature's answer, or what seems to be Nature's answer, to man's questioning as to the meaning of his existence, the meaning of life and death. "Such things have no meaning," says Nature, "They are just a happening." But the poet refuses to take this as Nature's final answer.

"And he, shall he,
"Man, her last work, who seemed so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

"Who trusted God was love indeed,
And love Creation's final law
Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieked against his creed—

"Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
Who battled for the true and just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills"

And his answer is immediate:

"No more? A monster, then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music matched with him."

And this too is our verdict. But you will notice how Tennyson has described Nature:

"Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieked against his creed."

The great Gladstone, in talking with John Morley at the breakfast table, in Biarritz, whither they both had gone to rest, contradicted this view of Nature. "Nature is not red in tooth and claw," he said. "The animal creation is for the most part happy and not miserable." But without stopping to decide this, I think we can truly affirm that in man there is the clear discernment of moral distinctions. The element of worthiness enters and remains. We use the words good and bad, noble and base, and the words have meaning for us. It is not sufficient that a man should work hard—he must work hard for a worthy end. It is not enough that he should make his body to sweat with effort, and his mind to sweat with thought; he must make his soul to sweat with the anxiety that comes from love.

No matter how great an achievement a man may have wrought, into it there must have entered some worthy element. Otherwise we deny that of such a man in any adequate sense it can be said that he made a success of life.

Ambition has been extolled as a great virtue. And I would not minimize its value to humanity. Under its impetus we are spurred on to climb with greater zest. But sometimes our ambitions restrict our sphere of service. A schoolboy once said that the Duke of Marlborough was a great general who always fought with the fixed determination to win or lose! It might be as well for us not to leave the choice quite so wide. Let us drop the fixed determination to lose, and satisfy ourselves with the resolve to win. So much may ambition do for us. But oftentimes it leads men to overstep the bounds of prudence, and the bounds of worthiness, and work only in pure selfishness. The rewards for which such men seek are purely personal. They climb, no matter how others are thrust down. And that ingrained selfishness has spoiled what otherwise would have been a great achievement. In the business world we have countless illustrations of the vitiating influence of this insidious temptation. Indeed in business life it is hard to know where to draw the line, and a man must have a very fine sense of honor, and a very keen spirit of sympathy, to keep him true amid the keen competition and the narrow profits of modern business conditions. For in the case of Jay Gould, we have a man eminently successful, starting from the lowest rung of the ladder, a lad of poverty, and climbing step by step, through industry, insight,

thrift, and unceasing energy, until at last he stands at the top, and the whole financial world does him obeisance. And yet the heart of the world honors him not, simply because of his ruthless methods of business, engendered by a crass, undisguised selfishness, resulting in untold misery to hundreds of thousands of his fellow creatures. And whenever personal ambition leads to such methods, whenever it moves at the dictates of selfish interests, then it ought to be condemned in the open forum of thought, and its results ought to be held up to the scorn of a considering world.

In war we have had a Napoleon. In politics we have had a Sir Robert Walpole. Each stands condemned to the generations that followed him. There is no attempt to deny Napoleon's mighty military genius, nor Walpole's suave success as a policy of opportunism. In his own generation each was the outstanding figure of his country, and in the case of the man of war his very word shook the thrones of kings to their foundations. And what Napoleon did with his soldiers and his batteries on the wide field of Europe, Walpole, the man of peace, did with his pawns and his bribes on the narrower field of England. Power here certainly, and success of a kind; but power which has been wrongly used, and that kind of success which stinks in the nostrils of all right-thinking people. And though these men may dazzle their own generations and hypnotize them with the domineering force of their own personality, yet the sober judgment of succeeding generations will estimate them at their true value and give them their true place in the world's

Valhalla. As Abraham Lincoln's sound common sense put it, you cannot fool all the people all the time. Ambition is good, and the man who possesses ambition possesses the quality which sends the engine out of the round house, its indicator pointing to 180 lbs. of steam pressure. There is the impetus to send it on its journey and carry its train of cars with it. But the ambition which moves at the dictates of selfishness, the ambition that knows nothing save personal supremacy, the ambition which works within the small circle of one's own interests, one's own advancement, one's own pleasure, the ambition which makes stepping stones of other men's dead hopes, and dead bodies, or dead souls, – that ambition is the man's own worst enemy; it overreaches itself and makes him to stumble in confusion; it brings down about his ears the castle which he has erected with infinite toil; and it makes that man's very name to be a byword and a hissing and reproach to future generations.

So we refuse to call the selfish man a successful man. Be his gifts ever so great, and his industry ever so noteworthy, yet thereby is the tragedy of his life only deepened. He goes out into darkness, and his name is coupled with those of the world's great thieves. He has proved a false trustee, for he stole and used for himself what God gave him in trust for Humanity's good. Not in any list of the honored or of the noble will you find him enrolled; but should eternity contain such a thing as a Rogues' Gallery – which I very much doubt—but should that list of the dishonored be preserved, look and you will find there your great men of selfishness.

I pass on to speak a word about the search for knowledge. The ladder of knowledge represents, I suppose, the first real bit of steep climbing that we had to do. There were many times when we were weary; there were times when the rungs seemed so far apart that our child feet would not reach up, and father or mother or teacher had to help us over that hard place. Withal there was something wonderfully interesting in the new views of life which came to us at each successive stage in our upward journey. The child's view of the world is a very small one. It is bounded by the walls of the play yard and peopled with the home people and a few aunts and uncles and cousins. Then come the school days, and it first dawns upon us that the world is larger than we formerly knew, and takes in our town. Each year thereafter marks a new stage in progress. Letters combine into words, and words represent ideas, and ideas transfer themselves to books and newspapers. The multiplication table becomes the instrument of wonderful combinations, and we are led through the intricacies of arithmetic. An algebra book is put into our hands and its symbols speak with a hitherto undreamed of power. Euclid shows us how to build a marvellous series of structures with but one or two tools given us to start with. Then comes Cæsar's Gallic War and Xenophon's March of the Ten Thousand, and we link up our age with these far-off days. History peoples the intervening centuries with living forms, and we learn how truly it could be said, that others have labored and we have entered into their labors. Chemistry shows us some of the elements

that enter in to make up our universe, and the laws of their combinations; while in physics we trace the great natural forces that play at our feet and offer their services for our good. And where shall we stop? When we leave the public school? When we leave the high school? When capped and hooded by the university president? When we have specialized in theological, or medical, or legal, or business college? Surely not, for the passion for knowledge is in our blood, and our appetites have been but whetted, and we know that more glorious sights await our eyes, if only we climb higher. So the truly ambitious man, the man of earnest spirit, is a student all his days. I have climbed the steep winding road that leads up the Abbey Craigs, and have panted with fatigue as I reached the top. Then I have gazed upwards at 200 and odd feet that the Wallace Monument raised its proud height towards the sky. As I lay full length in the grass looking westward and southward to the town of Stirling, across the beautiful valley of the Forth, "Upward it must be," I said, "Having seen so much I must see more." So step after step, and step after step, of them, until at last I was out upon the topmost balcony, and my eyes were feasting upon such panoramas as are seen in but few places in the world. Was it worth the climb? A thousand times yes! And were there a thousand more steps leading a thousand feet higher, up I would have gone for the new views to be obtained from this greater height. So does knowledge lure us on. There is no permanent place of abode. We may rest for a while, if we will, on this level and

on that, but at no one place can we say, "Here the ladder ends: you can climb no further." There is no such place as that, but far as our eyes can see, upward the path trends, until when sight fails we use imagination and say, "This surely leads to the very throne of God." As in truth it does.

Worth while, then, for their own sakes, are these new visions of life and duty, that come with this high altitude of knowledge. But there are practical interests to be served by such toil. I have said that life ever should lead on to better things, and with this thought in mind we can appreciate the suggestiveness of the following tombstone inscription: "Maria Brown, wife of Timothy Brown, aged eighty years. She lived with her husband fifty years, and died in the confident hope of a better life." Doubtless she deserved it. And it ought not to reflect too much on the past to say that there is better ahead. But the value of an increased knowledge is not merely that it results in a better condition for the Knower, but that it results also in a better condition for his neighbors, and for his generation, and for every generation that comes after. The world is saved by its leaders, especially by its leaders in thought. One man climbs higher than his fellows, sees more as a consequence, shouts down his new discovery to those on the lower levels, with the result that the great crowd below can so guide their destinies as if they actually saw with the eyes of the man far up the height. The world, I say, is saved by its leaders. Salvation by faith is not Paul's doctrine. It is the world's doctrine, and Paul merely showed his insight when he took a world principle and applied it

to religion. Does James Watt discover a new application of the expansive power of steam? Forthwith the whole world moves forward into a new era of industrial development. Does Morse discover a new application of electricity? Forthwith the whole world is bound together by the telegraph wire and cable. Does Marconi discover hidden forces lurking in the atmosphere? Forthwith every sea-going passenger ship is equipped with wireless apparatus, to the great safety and comfort of travellers. So it is ever and everywhere. The hope of the world is in its climbers. The most thoughtful poet of the last century has magnificently embodied this truth in w' has been called one of the greatest passages i literature of mankind. It is Paracelsus who sp

"For these things tend still upward, progress is
The law of life, man is not man as yet.
Nor shall I deem his object served, his end
Attained, his genuine strength put fairly forth,
While only here and there a star dispels
The darkness, here and there a towering mind
O'erlooks its prostrate fellows: when the host
Is out at once to the despair of night,
When all mankind alike is perfected,
Equal in full-blown powers — then, not till then,
I say, begins man's general infancy.
For wherefore make account of feverish starts
Of rest' s members of a dormant whole,
Impatient nerves which quiver while the body
Slumbers as in a grave? Oh, long ago
The brow was twitched, the tremulous lids astir,
The peaceful mouth disturbed; half-uttered speech
Ruffled the lip, and then the teeth were set,
The breath drawn sharp, the strong right hand clenched
stronger,
As it would pluck a lion by the jaw;

The glorious creature laughed out even in sleep!
But, when full roused, each giant limb awake,
Each sinew strung, the great heart pulsing fast,
He shall start up and stand on his own earth,
Then shall his long triumphant march begin,
Thence shall his being date, thus wholly roused,
What he achieves shall be set down to him.
When all the race is perfected alike
As man, that is; all tended to mankind,
And, man produced, all has its end thus far:
But in completed man begins anew
A tendency to God. Prognostics told
Man's near approach; so in man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendor, ever on before
In that eternal circle life pursues.
For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
Their proper joys and griefs; *they grow too great*
For narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
Before the unmeasured thirst for good: while peace
Rises within them ever more and more.
Such men are even now upon the earth,
Serene amid the half-formed creatures round
Who should be saved by them and joined with them."

In this noble passage Browning indicates the purposes to be served by any great possession of knowledge or of the power which knowledge gives. It is for the enlightenment of humanity, that eventually humanity as a whole may come to stand where now stand the leaders. Thus the ladder of knowledge becomes glorified. A divine glory light shines upon it and from it, and it becomes transfigured into the ladder of service. Shakespeare speaks of one who gives himself to study as being sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. But thought loses its pale cast

when the divine idea of service shines through it: it becomes glorified. We usually depict service in some homely color, not royal purple but unobtrusive grey, not the scarlet that kings' daughters wear but the more serviceable and undefined dust color of the garb of the toiler. And yet in the glory light that springs from the eternal, when humanity once sees things from the new point of view of some mount of transfiguration, then behold the faded beauty of your royal purples and scarlets, and behold the glistering splendour of your once homely greys. For there is nothing more divine than that a man should seek to use knowledge, influence, power, for humanity's good. Are we here to get from our locality merely a livelihood? Not so: we are here to make it a better place, a more law-abiding place, a more beautiful place, a healthier, happier place. That we should get a living out of it is a mere incident. If we did not happen to get that living here we would have sought for it elsewhere. Is our citizenship an investment out of which we hope to get certain dividends in the shape of trade-rights and protection? An investment it truly is, but it is the country that should gather the dividends in the shape of added peace and prosperity, while we yearly increase the capital with our own growth in power and usefulness. The world has been slow to learn the lesson of the Carpenter of Nazareth. The accumulated stores of knowledge gathered in these intervening nineteen hundred years have changed our conceptions of many things. But one thing is being emphasized the more clearly with every passing year, and our added knowledge only sets it

the more prominently in the foreground, and that is the truth of the words spoken so many centuries ago, "Whosoever would become great among you, shall be your minister, and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant." The time is coming when the sober thinking world shall despise the man who lives to get. But the man who lives to give shall be held high in honor. Getters and givers there have always been, but hitherto the getters have been having the best of it, and you could hear the shouts of acclaim, "Behold your successful man." Now, however, truth is coming to her own, and the first shall be last and the last shall be first. The givers are receiving the laurels. A man's worth is determined by the good he has done. He may not be a Rockefeller or a Carnegie: that is unimportant. Not having money he can give what is better: time, brains, capacity, influence.

There is something terrifying in the rough clang of the fire-bell. Our pulse beats fast at the thunder of horses' feet along the pavement as fire engine, hose cart, ladder waggon and salvage corps rush past. We join the throng that press to the scene of disaster. The despairing shriek from some upper window makes our blood to freeze in our veins. We cover our eyes lest they behold what perchance they could never forget, something that would come back in our dreams to affright us again and again. But listen! the people cheer. And we look to see the fire ladder placed against the house. And we shout our encouragement to the brave man who is running up the rungs as fast as hands and feet can carry him. His

act becomes our act as we identify ourselves with him in thought and purpose and anxiety. And for the same reason our prayer becomes his prayer: God give him the grip of security, and speed him that he may be in time! And then there is the shout, the shout of joy, the shout that acclaims a victory, the shout that greets a hero. This is the man whom our hearts delight to honor. He climbed to do good. He climbed to rescue. A life saved, a home made happy, a community rejoicing! God give us men ever ready to climb for purposes like these.

But what about the failures? What about the multitude who never come into prominence, of whom the world never hears, whose name the daily press but rarely mentions? What about these? Are they to be considered at all? Are they to be taken into account, or shall we just lay them to one side and ignore them as we turn our thoughts to greater men?

Greater men? I am not so sure about that. If our study to-night has accomplished anything, it has surely taught us that prominence does not mean greatness. Many a fool and many a villain has climbed to dizzy heights; and I think we might just remind ourselves that a ladder leads also to the scaffold where the hangman stands. There are thousands of the world's great men mixed among what is called the common herd, doing common duties in common or uncommon ways. I plucked a little poem from out the London Spectator a year or two ago. It was a rejoinder to a certain speech which implied that a vigorous boyhood brought on premature senility, which insinuated that most of those most prominent in school work, in

maturer years went under. The poem is called "Gone Under:"

Where are those now that used to get
  The prizes of our schoolboy days?
Gone under!—if they're living yet.
  But listen ere you stint your praise.
It's not the idler or the fool
That always gets the most from school.

The boy whose people have to grind
  To send their son to school at all,
The boy who slowly trains his mind
  To answer in whatever call,
Who counts among his careful gains
The trick of always taking pains,

May have no friend to point the way
  To wealth or fame. To pick and choose
Is not for him. A meagre pay,
  That others scorn, he can't refuse.
Hunger and nakedness and thirst
Send him to tackle what comes first.

He drudged at school for other boys,
  Did his own work and theirs as well.
They're rulers now, and make the noise;
  He's still got only brains to sell;
But all he does is sound and strong,
And goes to help the world along.

'Gone under?' If you like! As trees
  Stand firm on roots that grip the soil,
So States are formed on men like these,
  And Empires builded on their toil—
'Gone under' that foundations may
Hold showier structures up to-day.

So myriad patient corals spend
  Their lives, and grave is heaped on grave
Below the sea, but in the end
  The island's there, and palm-trees wave
Round the lagoon, a sacred wreath
That crown the dead who rest beneath.

So this truth is borne in upon us, that all men cannot be equally prominent. A man may be doing his work faithfully, doing it nobly, and his work may result in great blessing to many, yet his name may be unknown outside his own town.

Another reason comes forward to explain some of the apparent failures—a reason the very opposite of the one just given. These men seem to fail, not because they are common toilers, but just because they cannot be common toilers. They never rise out of obscurity, because they sought to be uncommon toilers. They sought to be that—and their thoughts soared far above all principalities and powers and heights. Misunderstood by their neighbors they were laughed at as dreamers and fanatics. But who knows how their eternal worth shall be counted? It is Browning, to whom I am already so deeply indebted in this lecture, who gives me my illustrations. I quote from "The Grammarian's Funeral." The body of the poor despised, misunderstood scholar is being carried to its last resting place far up the hillside by a few faithful friends who sing as they go:

"That low man sees a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:
This high man with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This throws himself on God and unperplexed
Seeking shall find him."

The same truth is brought out in Rabbi Ben Ezra, of which however I quote only one stanza:

"For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not
Sink i' the scale."

There are men too great in their nature to seek the tinsel of earthly glory. Human applause seems so small a thing. Human rewards seem but empty mockery. And the hand-clap is oftentimes so unfairly and so thoughtlessly given. Better do without it, and let your work be its own reward. Do your duty faithfully, and be content with the consciousness of work well done. Or like the man in Scripture, so realize your frailties of heart, that having done your best you still call yourselves unprofitable servants. This is the attitude of many. Our poet has given us in a rollicking ballad a most vivid account of the young Breton sailor, Herve Riel, who had rescued from the closely pursuing English the remnant of the French fleet. In gratitude to him the admiral speaks out:

You have saved the king his ships,
You must name your own reward.
* * * * * *
Demand whate'er you will,
France remains your debtor still.
Ask to heart's content and have.
Then a beam of fun outbroke
On the bearded mouth that spoke,
As the honest heart laughed through
Those frank eyes of Breton blue:

Since I needs must say my say,
Since on board the duty's done,
And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what
is it but a run?—
Since 'tis ask and have, I may,—
Since the others go ashore—
Come! A good whole holiday!
Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call
the Belle Aurore!
That he asked and that he got,—nothing more.

Name and deed alike are lost:
Not a pillar nor a post
In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell;
Not a head in white and black
On a single fishing smack,
In memory of the man but for whom had gone
to wrack
All that France saved from the fight whence
England bore the bell
Go to Paris: rank on rank
Search the heroes flung pell-mell
On the Louvre, face and flank!
You shall look long enough ere you come to
Herve Riel.

So, for better or for worse,
Herve Riel, accept my verse!
In my verse, Herve Riel, do thou once more
Save the squadron, honor France, love thy wife,
the Belle Aurore!

Long years ago the story was told of a lad who fled his father's home because of a wrong he had done his brother. We make no excuse for his wrong. These things have a fashion of coming home with their own bitter regrets. We cannot kill memory, and in this case we can permit memory to do its own chastening work, during that long journey in loneliness

and fear. However attractive sin may seem in the doing, there is nothing attractive in the contemplation of the burnt-out ashes of a spent passion. Despair gnawed at the heart of the lad. He had not a soul to whom he could tell his troubles. The whole country-side was strange to him. Darkness was settling down around him. Bitter tears of remorse flowed down his cheek, and bitter thoughts filled his heart. Under the open sky he laid himself down for a troubled sleep, with nothing softer than a stone for his pillow. Is it strange that at such a time there came a message of hope? Is not man's extremity ever God's opportunity? Though a man has done wrong, is he not worth saving? Shall we for ever be in chains to a dishonored past? Is there no power to help us break with all wrongs, and to give us assurance of hope and victory in the future? God is not cruel. And Jacob dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and spake to him. It was a new Jacob that arose in the morning.

And the ladder is still there, and its further end reaches to heaven, and there is no reason why we should stop climbing till we have reached the top.