

Following is one of his most thoughtful lectures:

"THE BATTLE OF LIFE, AND HOW TO FIGHT IT"^{8}

The civil and military history of the world has turned on a few decisive battles. Had they resulted differently, the whole history of mankind might have been changed: On the field of Marathon, Greece was saved from the heel of Persian despotism; on the field of Arbela, Alexander conquered the Oriental world. The battle of Marengo, placed the iron crown on Napoleon's brow; Waterloo swept it off. The American Revolution turned on the pivot of the fight at Saratoga, and the struggle for Union and Liberty, on that at Gettysburg.

There is a bright side to life, and a heroic and noble side to human nature, as exemplified in the lives of many men and women who have conquered in the battle of life. These inspire us with noble ideals, and prove by their example the possible fruition of human endeavor. Of such class, Benjamin Franklin stands almost alone in his ability to overcome adverse circumstances, and while such heroism is not, and probably never will be, an every day occurrence, rightly studied every life should serve as an impetus to those who "having eyes see not" the satisfaction in store for all that equip themselves properly for the duties and responsibilities of life.

In considering the characters that have made history, it is interesting to note that a large per cent of them were cradled in obscurity, and attained a notable place on the world's roll of honor only by refusing to acknowledge environment master of their destiny: The father of Columbus was a weaver; of Homer, a farmer; of Demosthenes, a cutter; of Virgil, a porter; and of Franklin, a soap boiler. While a large per cent of the world has become perverted, so that labor is considered demeaning, it is not the less true that mental development and stability are dependent upon muscular activity. Health and happiness are acquired only by those who work more or less with their hands. Elihu Burrett, the blacksmith, had a healthy brain because of his natural physical development, as did also Buxton, the philanthropist. Count Tolstoi of our day serves as an illustration of the truth that even one's literary efforts may be broadened and rendered more effective by combining with the mental labor, a goodly amount of physical activity.

Not all life's battles are fought in the bloody chasm, nor on fields red with gore; neither have all its victories been won by an Alexander, a Nero, Napoleon, Grant nor Sheridan. In the humbler walks of life have been found men and women who have done grander deeds and won more enduring laurels. Their deeds may not have been published in newspapers, nor their names embalmed in libraries. Fame has refused to herald them abroad,—obscure and unknown they have acted their part in the drama of life and have passed on; but, if we mistake not, a record of their deeds will be found in the book of life.

From the first inception of this great nation, industry was the vital spark, the embryonic promise of its future glory. The Pilgrim Fathers in their quest for civil and religious freedom planted on Plymouth Rock the habits of industry, which, as the generations passed, became so thrifty and fruitful that "all have got the seed."

It was impossible to separate from the Puritan character the quality of industry. It was

interwoven with his religion, his love of freedom and his frugality. It stood him well in hand during the days of monarchical oppression, when George the Third issued his arbitrary command that the Colonists should work no more in wood and iron; when his soldiery patrolled our forests, marking as the "King's own" our giant sentinels. Thank God there was no abatement of their infant industries until the call to arms; and today this scorned command is answered from ocean to ocean, from the Great Lakes to the Great Gulf, in the shrieking of ten thousand engines; in the whirl of burnished steel, in the ceaseless turning of innumerable wheels.

Consider in a wider and a more general scope what industry has done: It has built the Pyramids on Egypt's plains; erected the gorgeous Temple of Jerusalem; reared the Seven Hilled City, scaled the stormy, cloud-capped Alps, and tunneled their interior; leveled the forest of a New World, and reared in their stead a community of States and Nations. It has brought from the marble block the exquisite creations of genius; it has put in motion millions of spindles; harnessed as many iron steeds to as many freight cars and sent them flying from village to city, from nation to nation; it has tunneled mountains of granite, and annihilated space with the lightning's speed; it has whitened the waters of the world with the sails of a hundred nations; navigated every sea, and explored every land. It has reduced Nature in its thousands of forms to as many sciences; taught her laws; prophesied her future movements, measured her untrodden spaces, counted her myriad hosts of worlds and computed their distances, dimensions and velocities.

All of these wonderful things and more it has accomplished in the physical world, the conception of which in their entirety would have been impossible in our fathers' time, and yet monuments of constructive genius are not to be compared with the living domes of intellectuality, sparkling temples of virtue, and the rich glory-wreathed sanctuaries of religion which industry has wrought from the minds of men. The most potent forces of life are those which are silent and unseen,—whose subtle workings are the concomitants of that mysterious mechanism that belongs to the boundless and indefinable realms of thought. The toil-sweated productions of wealth, piled in vast profusion around a Rothschild or Rockefeller are nothing when weighed against the stores of wisdom, the treasuries of knowledge, and the strength, beauty and glory with which this victorious virtue has enriched and adorned a great multitude of minds during the march of a hundred generations.

The industry of Newton, Howard and Channing means much to us who have profited by the months and years of earnest effort employed by them to make the world better for their having lived in it.

Those who have engaged in the battle of life should be sure that the cause in which they have enlisted is a good one,—one that God and Nature sanction—and then they should be true to it and fight for it. The victory is to the strong, and to those who throw mind, heart and soul into an undertaking, not considering the results so much as the accomplishment of today's duty.

If you would win friends, be steady and true to yourself. Be the unfailing friend of your own purpose; stand by your own character, and others will come to your aid. Though your ideal of today appears far removed, it is well to reflect that every step takes you nearer to it.

So closely are industry and fidelity united that the one is ever associated in our minds with the other, though fidelity does not necessarily suggest the degree of activity that industry presupposes. Both qualities may be cultivated to an extent such as to round out the character and make man master of himself, though I believe that at birth the virtues exist in embryo and that in some they are much more strongly marked than in others. For this reason life is a far greater struggle for some than for others, and those who have worked industriously to cultivate these qualities often succeed in eclipsing those to whom Nature was much kinder.

Gentleness, the virtue which softens and gives amiability to our disposition and behavior, is possibly more potent in its objective influence than any of the virtues, though we would by no means confuse this characteristic with a passive tameness of spirit that is suggestive of indifference and absence of character. Conformity is not gentleness but weakness. Gentleness presupposes intelligence and sympathy, hence in order to aid in bringing about proper conditions, the gentlest person may often appear to the ignorant and unthinking as cruel and unkind.

True gentleness, therefore, is to be carefully distinguished from the mean spirits of cowards, and the fawning assent of sycophants; it renounces no just right from fear; it gives up no important truth from flattery; it is, indeed, not only consistent with a firm mind, but it necessarily requires a manly spirit and a fixed principle in order to give it any real value. It stands opposed to harshness and severity, to pride and arrogance, to violence and oppression.

Added to the virtues already expanded, in order to become equipped for the great combat of life, one must possess *fortitude* in no small degree. I have thought that if the battle is not always to the strong, the victory is often his who has learned to bear the vicissitudes of the strife with hope and patience.

Though fortitude and courage are generally considered as identical in meaning, there is a distinct difference between these leading manly characteristics. Courage resists danger; fortitude supports pain. Courage may be a virtue or a vice, according to the controlling circumstances; fortitude is always a virtue,—we speak of a desperate courage, but not of a desperate fortitude.

Fortitude is strongest in those who have endured most. The skilled mariner obtains his best experience amid storms and tempests, thus augmenting his self-reliance and courage and learning the highest discipline. So from the storms of life, from its rude shocks of misfortune and its blasts of adversity does man become strong, courageous and victorious.

In order to succeed one must possess in addition to the four virtues named, a goodly amount of Prudence, or, in other words, a knowledge of what is to be desired and avoided, else failure may be expected. A wise discrimination as to choice both of ends and means, and a power of suiting words and actions with reference to controlling circumstances are indispensable to one who engages in the battle of life; provided time is utilized to a purpose.

While it is true that human nature is moulded by a thousand subtle influences—environment, precept, education, literature and precedent, man must ever be the active agent of his own well being and doing. This is well illustrated by the works of scientific men in the

caution with which they present their ideas. Though the science of today is in many respects as absolute as mathematics, yet they who have delved to the greatest depths recognize the vast treasuries of knowledge that lie beyond the grasp of even the wisest, and they realize that we are still compelled to reason from relative premises. In the moral world, however, there is no occasion for humility, since man may be an arbiter of his own fate, and in the degree that he depends upon outside influences to do for him what he is capable of doing for himself, he is guilty of weakness such as to preclude the possibility of growth. One must learn to govern self before attempting to direct or govern others, otherwise his influence is of little value. The superficiality of self-constituted leadership is acknowledged by all classes of people, yet comparatively few recognize the principle that underlies its weakness. Though wealth and position may not be the inheritance of all, provided one is capable of conceiving of true character, there is nothing to interfere with one's possession of it, nor any excuse for the weak links in the chain. In most cases they are there—this cannot be gainsaid—but only because one is unwilling to "sell all" that he has in order to secure it. What we care for most, we get. If one is willing to subordinate every other faculty to the acquisition of wealth, he may get wealth; if to knowledge, he may acquire it. And if one desires above all else to possess the five manly virtues—or character—it may be his in abundance.

When the shadows of earth are passing away and the realities of another life shall dawn, I fear there are many so-called victors who will take inferior positions, since the time has come when true worth alone will pass muster. Sometimes in vision I see the great ones of earth putting in their claims for recognition: The orator challenged, pleads past eloquence that has swayed thousands like corn in the summer wind; moved them to tears and incited them to passion; the poet urges his claim, in that he brought people to tears through his songs of love; the painter begs for recognition because of his careful reproduction of Nature and its influence in lifting up, and civilizing, his fellow men; the sculptor boasts of his ability to give speech to marble and breath to plastic clay. Last of all the warrior begs consideration in that though he has planned mighty battles, slain thousands, caused kings and empires to tremble at his will, all was done in the cause of mercy to prevent a fiercer struggle and a bloodier carnage.

Still in a dream I see them all pass on to great and sure reward, each having improved his talent and fulfilled his duty according to the light given. And yet the vision is incomplete—I marvel that the richest diadems are reserved for these, when suddenly a great and surging throng are thrown on canvas! They are without scepter or laurel wreath, the purple or ermine of kings; I recognize no Demosthenes, Homer, Michael Angelo nor Napoleon, but challenged, I hear a weak response: "I have loved and cared for little children"; and another, "I have visited the sick and imprisoned, and offered the cup of cold water in His name."

All life is a battle, and every man has his decisive one. We all have our moral Marengos and Waterloos, where we win or lose the crown of victory. A "yes" or "no" has cost many a man his fortune and has revealed limitations that even the possessor did not dream existed. It is well that a few simple rules of moral welfare should be remembered when decisive conflicts are imminent:—

- Never place on guard a doubtful principle. Your sentinel will be sure to betray you.

- Never change your position in the face of an enemy. This was a fatal policy to Russians at Austerlitz; it has caused many a disgraceful defeat in moral and spiritual warfare.
- Never abandon the high ground of right for the low lands and swamps of expediency. No man was ever lost in a straight road.
- Never yield an inch to the enemy. It is hard to recover a line that has begun to retreat.

It appears to be the natural desire of every human heart to live to a great age, and yet a large per cent exist without purpose, and can give no logical reason for desiring it to be extended. Unrest and dissatisfaction are on every hand, and the question as to the utility or value of life is uppermost with the majority. There is a practical solution of life in the minds of nearly all thinking people, which could become effective, if there were less incredulity existing among those who long for humane and proper conditions. They recognize wrong and selfishness, but believe it to be inevitable, and therefore make no effort to surmount precedent. If we put on the armor of the five virtues and wear it with credit, we can by example alone overcome much of the skepticism that exists concerning the possibilities of human nature—its strength and stability. There is much latent force both in men and women of which the world knows nothing, simply because the conditions of their lives are such that their strongest gifts remain dormant. It is questionable whether even the noblest and best have a full comprehension of their own heroism. For instance, in the case recently quoted of an obscure laboring man meeting death while closing a switch, the failure to do which would have cost the lives of a large number of people,—in all probability this was the outgrowth of kindness and brotherly love, the depth of which the man was not conscious until put to the test. And yet, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend."

That which raises a country; that which strengthens it; that which spreads its power and creates its moral influence is character! And of this we can all be possessed.

"This above all, to thine own self be true; and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."