

NOT ABOVE ONE'S BUSINESS

All necessary occupations are honorable. No disgrace can reasonably attach to them, except where the men or women who follow them are disgraceful. The truest dignity will crown the faithful in the humblest employment. They are entitled to a creditable passport into the best circles.

And yet this commonly accepted view of necessary pursuits is strangely overlooked in practice. Many people consider certain useful callings menial and degrading. Where they admit the necessity of such labors, they still regard them as ignoble.

Young people often catch this spirit. The store and learned professions attract them more than the shop and farm. The desire among boys to exchange country for city life arises, in a great measure, from this distorted view of manual labor. It is not popular to work on a farm or in a shop. It is more genteel to handle the yardstick than hoe or shovel. They will rank higher as ministers, doctors, or lawyers, than they will as mechanics or farmers.

Such are their false opinions, and they sacrifice everything to this delusion. Nine-tenths of all the youth who begin life on this line make a deplorable failure. Doctor Johnson well said, "He that feels his business is below him, will surely fall below it."

We risk nothing in saying that successful men, in all occupations, are the men who never feel above their business. Whatever their employment is, they consider that their occupation challenges respect. Illustrations of this statement abound in the business world.

The Boston millionaire and philanthropist, Amos Lawrence, employed a clerk, in his early business life, who was quite conceited. One day Mr. Lawrence asked him to take a package for a lady customer to her residence; but he declined, on the ground that the act would compromise his dignity. His employer rebuked him in the most cutting way, by taking the bundle himself to the lady's home.

It is doubtful, however, if a young man so ignorant of what true manhood is, can be profited by either rebuke or counsel. Conveying the package did not compromise the dignity of Mr. Lawrence, but magnified it essentially. It showed that there was nothing of the fop or dude about him, characters that are justly despised by the thoughtful everywhere.

When the celebrated Samuel Drew was becoming famous as an author, though still in poverty, he was carrying in his winter's coal without the least idea that it was beneath his position. A neighbor said to him:—

“Drew, that work compromises your dignity as an author.”

Drew's reply is worthy of a place in the memory of every aspirant for real honors:—

“The man who is ashamed to carry in his own coal, deserves to sit all winter by an empty grate.”

It was this spirit that enabled him to achieve remarkable success.

Peter the Great laid aside the robes of royalty, and entered the East India dockyard at Amsterdam, in disguise, to learn the art of shipbuilding. He took his place among the workmen, and became, in all respects, one of them; even wearing the same kind of dress, eating the same sort of food, and inhabiting equally humble lodgings. He possessed a strong desire to benefit his own countrymen by making them more familiar with the shipbuilding business, and he believed that the best way of accomplishing his purpose was to learn the art himself.

It never occurred to him that royalty would be compromised by the occupation of a ship-carpenter, nor did he care. He did not feel above doing anything that would prove a lasting good to his country. He deserved to be called “Peter the Great.”

Washington was a man of this class. At one time, when several divisions of the army were engaged in constructing works of defence from Wallabout Bay to Red Hook, one of the parties, under the supervision of a subaltern officer, had a large

timber to raise. While engaged in raising it, the officer doing nothing but shout, "Now, boys, right up, he-e-a-v-e," etc., a man rode up on horseback. "Why do you not help?" he inquired. The officer indignantly replied, "I help! Why, sir, I'll have you know that I am corporal!" The gentleman sprang from his horse, laid hold of the timber with the men, and very soon it was in the required place. Then turning to the corporal, he said: "Mr. Corporal, my name is George Washington. As soon as you have completed this work, meet me at your commander's quarters." There was no room in the army for a man who found so much dignity in a corporalship as to make him feel above lifting a timber. He was dismissed.

A pompous young merchant of Philadelphia purchased his dinner at the market one day, and gave a shilling to a seedy-looking man standing by to carry it to his house. He was somewhat mortified, however, to learn afterward that it was the celebrated Girard who played the role of a servant for him. Girard meant to show the young sprout what a fool he was, and cure him of his folly, if possible.

In striking contrast with the last incident, a young man purchased a bag of coffee of Girard, who was always careful about whom he trusted. The buyer wheeled the bag to his place of business, and when he came for more Girard offered to trust him to any amount. The offer was accepted; the two men became firm friends, and the young trader amassed a fortune in time.

Benjamin Franklin wheeled his paper from the warehouse to his printing office, when he set up business in Philadelphia; Daniel Safford, one of the wealthy, noble, honored business men of Boston, carried home on his back the iron which he bought when he commenced the blacksmith's business in that city; a New York millionaire earned his first dollar as a hod-carrier in the city of Troy, and he never became so proud as to despise a hod.

When Napoleon became a member of the military academy at Paris, he found that each student had a servant to groom his horse, and wait upon him generally. He addressed a remonstrance to the governor against this practice, maintaining that "a student of military affairs should learn to groom his own horse clean his own armor, and accustom himself to the performance of such duties as would be required of him for service in the field." Subsequently he established a military

school at Fontainebleau, where this system was introduced, and proved the practical wisdom of its author. He who is too proud to wait upon himself is doomed to disappointment. Success will never wait on him.

“Honor and fame from no condition rise;

Act well your part—there all the honor lies.”

“Gaining Favor with God and Man” by William Thayer, pp. 227-231