

Does Success Make One Generous?

AS A MATTER OF ACTUAL FACT, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." We may think we "own" a ship, but in one minute a tidal wave can swallow it, return it to God's storehouse, and leave us destitute.

We may dig a hole in the ground and extract gold or other minerals, under the delusion that we "own" a mine; but suddenly Salamanders light the hidden fires, an explosion takes place, and our wealth has vanished. God has taken His own.

We may melt the iron ore in the mountains, making pillars and girders for a towering structure; we may mix cement for its walls, and place our names over its portals to signify our proud ownership; but an earthquake can undo in minutes the work of months, and when it does, the twisted pillars are taken to the scrap heap to disintegrate, for God has taken His own.

As a matter of fact, *we do not and cannot own any material thing*. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." Whatever we appropriate and accumulate is at best a loan. God is not always consulted regarding His willingness to lend either, and the debt may be called in at any moment.

Thus the man whose *only* aim is accumulation is a fool. Many whose whole heart and soul are set upon the acquisition of wealth realize this subconsciously, and they therefore try to further deceive themselves with the idea that the possession of wealth is not their ultimate aim, but only a means to an end. This imagined object is always altruistic in a certain measure because it makes them feel good and righteous. It is pleasant for a boy to dream of wealth wherewith to bring comfort to his aged parents; it flatters his vanity to think of himself as their benefactor, and he enjoys in anticipation their expressions of praise and gratitude. He may withdraw his present support, and justify his neglect on the plea that he wants to be unhampered while "making his pile." Then he will "make up for it."

But he that is not "faithful," or helpful, when he has little does not become generous when he has amassed much, any more than the leopard changes its spots, and therefore, at the door of death, if not before, God demands ALL that such a one borrowed, and interest too in sorrow and suffering when the pictures in purgatory make him feel his hardness of heart.

It is literally true that "he that gives to the poor lends to the Lord," that he lays up "treasure in heaven," for in the postmortem existence the benevolence which prompted his kind acts and the gratitude of those who were helped by him react upon him, and give him added soul power.

It is bad business to be stingy, but discriminate generosity brings success here and hereafter.

Nor should we defer the cultivation of this virtue until we have acquired an abundance. Christ eulogized "the widow" because her gift, though small, probably involved a great sacrifice and denial of some necessity. Therefore it was truly greater than the gifts of those who lived in affluence, and did not feel poorer in the world's goods by reason of their offering. We have no quarrel with the man who wants to acquire wealth that he may help more, but we reiterate, that while wealth opens up an avenue of expression of character, *it will not change a man's nature*. The man who is stingy when poor, actually becomes more grasping when wealthy. The man who is generous while in poor circumstances becomes more munificent when fortune favors. In every instance it is true that "what is bred in the bone comes out in the flesh," and it is just as important to cultivate the virtue of generosity as any other, even from the selfish point of view. As Ella Wheeler Wilcox says:

Give of thy gold, though small thy portion be.
Gold rusts and shrivels in the hand that keeps it.
It grows in one that opens wide and free.
Who sows his harvest is the one who reaps it. □