

Ambition

Ambition is a strong desire to get ahead in the world, to make a success of oneself in a material way. It is commonly supposed that ambition is absolutely necessary for any success, and that a person without ambition is sure to be a failure. The most obvious element in ambition is the desire to gain wealth, but this alone does not explain the great attraction which success holds for most men. It is the desire for power that drives men on and on, the power to satisfy all one's wants, to dominate one's fellowmen and to command their services. Man is always striving for perfection, hence his desire to dominate. Ambition therefore does not suppose only a desire for affluence and luxury, for these are secondary and accidental. It necessarily supposes a great longing to be looked up to, to be superior to and to dominate others. Almost all people are naturally imbued, at least to some degree, with ambition, and, therefore, nearly all people, whether consciously or subconsciously, desire personal power.

Ambition is perhaps the most necessary element for material success in life. Given ambition, a person's chances for success are very great. One may well agree with the old proverb, "When there is a will, there is a way." Ambition is the spur which drives a man into action. It points out to him a goal, and it commands him to attain it. It awakens him to a knowledge of his own capacities. It shows him the necessity of developing such capacities as are necessary for the attainment of that goal. It gives him confidence in himself and aids him in surmounting every obstacle that confronts him. A person without ambition easily falls into a rut, for he has no definite end to attain and, as a result, his natural abilities remain undeveloped. He has no confidence in himself. He is determined in his work and in his daily life by chance, and, by chance alone will his development take place. The probabilities of his success in life are very uncertain. Ambition, though necessary for success, is at the same time most overpowering and insatiable, because no sooner is one end attained than another is perceived, and no sooner is that perceived than it must be attained. Once a person is on the road to success, there is no stopping or slowing down. Few indeed are the great men of the day, complacent in their own success! Few indeed are those

who, having made great fortunes, are content to retire. Ambition starts them on the road to success and ambition can never be fully sated. From one success they are driven to another. The pride which they may feel in their own attainments is only momentary. It is soon superseded by the urge ever to move onward. In very few cases, indeed, are they enabled to overcome this urge.

If any person be endowed with a fiery ambition, let him overcome and forget it at once. For, whether he be successful or not, evil will be its effects upon him. It will always burn in him and when he turns away, disappointed in his quest, it will ever remain a bitter memory, reminding him of the things that might have been. But, if one should attain a certain success, let him remember that ambition is never satisfied. One success is only a stepping stone for a future, larger success. Ambition narrows a person altogether. It secures all his capacities for its own ends,—money, power and success, and in doing so, diverts him from affairs of much more importance. For these ends alone will he toil and slave. For these will he give up every thought of pleasure, of friends, of the duties which should be his. By his own blindness will he be led on to seek his own ends, giving up all that is worth while in life.

It may be easily seen how far astray ambition may lead one from the true end of man, which implies obligations both to God and to man. A person, inflamed with ambition which he cannot fulfill becomes a recluse, embittered and self-pitying, neglecting both obligations. He who is successful acts in like manner because of his complete absorption in his own ends. He loses all sense of charity, of religion and of morality. He can hardly be called immoral, rather unmoral. He takes what he desires in any way possible, right or wrong, lawful or unlawful, as long as he may escape punishment. It is his duty to live in peace and charity with all men. Disregarding this altogether, he thinks of men only as factors in his own success. God Himself is an entity which enters into his plan of life not at all.

I am not in sympathy with those who desire to be outstanding successes. Much of our present day trouble is found in this, that for the past few generations our youth have been educated for great material success alone, and that other lines of education have been neglect-

ed. Many have attained great success, many no success at all. On the one hand, this has led to an increase in capital and a decrease of money in circulation, the increase of production and the decrease of consumption. On the other hand, it has led to the wasting of money by all members of all classes, much of which they have not owned. All these causes have had a hand in the present depression and all may be traced back to overdeveloped ambitions. Moderate wealth and moderate success for all instead of great success for a few only is the cure for our present depression. Moderation seems to be the answer for every trouble. Too strong an ambition has the most evil effects whether attained or not. Moderate ambition, if attained, causes no great harm physically, morally or intellectually; if not attained, does not entail great disappointment or suffering.

—D. J. M., '32

How far that little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

—Shakespeare

God's in His Heaven; all's right with the world.

—Browning

Some for renown on scraps of learning dote,
And think they grow immortal as they quote.

—Young

