

loused hands of labor. We should not allow our muscles to be atrophied by indolence. Men are sent to this world not to stand the whole day idle, but to go forth to work and to labor until evening, not the evening of a day only, but the evening of life.

XII.

RELY ON YOUR OWN EFFORTS FOR YOUR PROGRESS AND HAPPINESS. BE NOT EASILY DISCOURAGED. PERSEVERE IN THE PURSUIT OF YOUR LEGITIMATE AMBITIONS.

Our life is what we make it. If we are to succeed, it is necessary that we possess self-reliance, courage, and perseverance, for out of these qualities, new strength is born which will enable us to overcome adversities and conquer difficulties. Even a bended tree finally succeeds in ascending the sky and resisting the winds by its own self-sufficiency. Therefore, trust yourself, be courageous, and persevere in your task.

In the life of Apolinario Mabini, we see a shining example of the triumph of self-reliance and perseverance over dire poverty and physical infirmity. Born of poor parents, his life was a constant struggle against untold hardship and suffering. His studies were repeatedly interrupted for lack of funds and yet by dint of hard work and sheer tenacity and self-denial he was able to finish his law course, which though belated, was attained with highest honors. Friends and admirers offered him financial assistance during his student days but he consistently refused their proffer of generosity. He feared that if he owed favors to anybody he might be forced later on to do an act against his convictions out of gratitude to his benefactor. He was thus able to maintain an unshakeable firmness of purpose and singular independence of thought and action to the end of his life.

Stricken with paralysis in his later years which deprived him of the use of both legs, his physical handicap did not deter him from taking an active part in the revolution, first as propagandist, then as principal adviser to General Aguinaldo and later as Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister of the Revolutionary Cabinet, which positions he discharged with such earnestness and brilliance that he is known to this day as the Brains of the Revolution.

He was finally appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, which office he was not able to assume because of the success of American arms and the consequent defeat of the ephemeral Philippine Republic.

In his biography of Mabini, Rafael Palma aptly said: "The study of the life of Mabini affords very important teachings. It shows how poverty, far from being a sign of malediction, is a strong stimulus which goads a man to improve his condition; how labor and study contribute to the formation of character, open to a man all the opportunities to rise and reach the heights, and help him maintain himself with dignity in any reverse of fortune, whether it be lucky or unlucky; how perseverance and determination win over difficulties and obstacles, and how success in all cases is the reward of consistency, perseverance and firmness of determination."

Teodoro M. Kalaw said the following of Mabini: "Agree with me in that a great part of his life was a life of poverty, of sufferings and of abnegations. The inspiration of a poet would find (in it) a theme for an elegy. Rarely would the tragic picture of pain be found hovering above man and endeavoring to dominate the vision of his future. Rarely would privation be found intimately connected with sickness, until it ends in a horrible death. But agree with me also in that poverty of origin and life's misfortunes were not insurmountable obstacles to the attainment of that human greatness, that extraordinary frame of mind, that we admire in Mabini. Mabini triumphed over his century, and he triumphed not only as a patriot and statesman, but as a man as well. Fate persecuted him from his birth and he triumphed against Fate. Through his own efforts, he made a career, by fighting against such obstacles, a thing which few in the world would have been able to do. He was a real *self-made man*."

Ignacio Villamor was another youth who rose from obscure poverty to positions of honor and responsibility in three distinct epochs of Philippine history, namely: the Spanish regime, the Philippine regime, and the American occupation. Because his parents lacked the means to defray his education, he enrolled in the Seminary of Vigan, Ilocos Sur, as an *agraciado*. In the Colegio de San Juan de Letran at Manila he worked his way first by helping his *casera* in her household and religious duties

in exchange for free board and lodging and later as *capista* in the college. Before the advent of the revolution he had already founded two schools. Then, he became a member of the Malolos Congress representing Abra and was one of the founders of the *Universidad Literaria de Malolos*. During the American regime he helped Enrique Mendiola found the *Liceo de Manila*. Afterwards he was appointed President of the University of the Philippines, and later Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. In his book on *Industrious Men* which he dedicated to the youth of the land, he left us a legacy in the form of biographies of illustrious Filipinos who overcame poverty and ignorance through the sheer force of self-reliance, thrift, industry and perseverance. Worthy of emulation is the example of one of these men, Mariano Pamintuan, whose advice to the youth is "Don't ask another for what you need; get it yourself."

Self-reliance was the gospel of the Revolution. In a desperate but prophetic mood, when he had given up hope of the mother country ever initiating reforms to ameliorate conditions in the Philippines, Graciano Lopez-Jaena, reformist turned revolutionist, wrote from Madrid to Rizal at Berlin on March 16, 1887: "We see, therefore, that we have nothing to expect from the powers that be; we have to rely upon ourselves alone for our own progress and regeneration."

If self-reliance was the shibboleth of the revolution, its twin-virtue, perseverance, was the slogan of the period of propaganda which preceded the revolution. Marcelo H. del Pilar, speaking for the intrepid group of reformists which Rizal and he headed, said: "Let us not hesitate even if we meet barriers and thorns on the way. What are these little inconveniences compared to the great misfortune of our country?"

The life of Rizal was the consummate flower of the virtue of perseverance, just as the life of Mabini was the quintessence of the virtue of self-reliance. Villamor said: "Dr. Rizal, like all great men, found his way strewn with difficulties and obstacles. But such difficulties were the touchstone of his character. We might almost say that he was born thinking of a country, that he studied and labored to make a country, and that he died in order to give life to a country. His difficulties and sufferings stimulated his perseverance, and the many obstacles which he encountered along his way

stirred up his energy and fortified his character. In this way he was able to complete his two literary works which gave him universal renown. And this is because in persons of good disposition, sufferings temper their character and give rise to profound and elevated thoughts. As there are flowers which need to be distilled in order that they may give out their most delicate fragrance, there are also individuals who must undergo some grueling test in order to arouse everything good that they have in them. Some Filipinos, apparently useless and without resolution, when placed in some difficult and responsible positions, have shown strength of character, ability, courage and abnegation which were never before seen in them. And it is because trying experiences bring forth their latent virtues and reveal their hidden qualities. His fortitude and determination is shown in the following evaluation of his character by Dr. Pardo de Tavera: "He submitted to the inevitable, and upon thinking that all that he was doing was leading him straight towards death, he smiled according to his custom, reflecting that all roads lead to death and that nobody can say how he shall die, but that everybody must decide how and for what he shall live."

Self-reliance is incompatible with the idea of seeking progress or triumph through protection or recommendation.

The examples of Rizal and Mabini amply show that difficulties are no obstacle to the realization of our legitimate ambitions if we persist and try hard enough. They remained hopeful and brave in the face of great difficulties. As Mabini said: "A high ideal whatever it may be, although difficult of attainment, may be realized through constant endeavor and honest effort."

The Creator has endowed each and every one of us with certain aptitudes and these we should develop to the limit of our abilities, seeing that upon ourselves alone depend our own progress and advancement in life. Let us seek inspiration from Mabini's injunction in his *True Decalogue*:

"*Third*—Thou shalt cultivate the special gifts which God has granted thee, working and studying according to thy ability, never leaving the path of righteousness and justice, in order to attain thy own perfection, by means whereof thou shalt contribute to the progress of humanity; thus shalt thou fulfill the mission to which God has appointed thee in this life,

and by so doing, thou shalt be honored, and being honored, thou shalt glorify God."

XIII.

DO YOUR WORK CHEERFULLY, THOROUGHLY, AND WELL. WORK BADLY DONE IS WORSE THAN WORK UNDONE. DO NOT LEAVE FOR TOMORROW WHAT YOU CAN DO TODAY.

A nation of energetic and busy people, a people working cheerfully and thoroughly, all shoulders to the wheel, with muscles swelling, with hearts pounding, a people finding in work the consummation of all their hopes and all their desires, a people who considers a duty well done as its own sufficient reward, is a nation destined, under God, to be great and strong.

The fourth precept of the *Duties of the Sons of the People* prepared by Bonifacio tells us that:

"Calmness, constancy, reason, and faith in all work and actions crown every good desire with success."

And in the seventh rule of *Katipunan Primer* prepared by Jacinto, we find the following injunction:

"Do not squander time; lost riches can be recovered; but time lost can not be regained."

Rizal exemplified these virtues to no mean degree in his passion for industry, thoroughness and determination to finish any work he had set out to accomplish. His advice to Mariano Ponce in a letter dated June 27, 1888, from London epitomizes his idealism in this respect:

"The fact that you have had little success in the newspapers does not mean that you may not be of any use as a writer. Not all of us are newspapermen, nor were born newspapermen, and not all literary men are newspapermen. I take it that the question of writing with more or less literature is a secondary thing; the principal thing is to think and feel straight, work for a goal, and the pen will take charge of transmitting it. The principal thing that should be required of a Filipino of our generation is not to be literary, but to be a good man, a good citizen who may help with his head, with his heart and, if need be, with his arms in the progress of his country. *With*

the head and with the heart, we can and should work always; with the arms, when the moment arrives. Now the principal instrument of the heart and of the head is the pen; others prefer the painter's brush, still others choose the chisel. I prefer the pen. Now, the instrument may not be to us the primal object. Sometimes with a bad one, say the Philippine bolo, great deeds are accomplished. Sometimes with a bad literature great truths may be stated."

In another letter to Ponce, dated at London, October 12, 1888, he revealed that upon being offered the opportunity to direct a newspaper to carry on the Filipino propaganda in Spain, he had to prepare himself by studying day and night in order to be better able to discharge his new responsibility. He said:

"With respect to the newspaper, I am very grateful for your wish, but I am already engaged, or somewhat, to manage one. Now I am devoting myself night and day to certain studies, for I should not want to manage any paper without having certain knowledge of the country, its history, its administration, because, as I understand, we shall have to fight much, and it would be nice to fight and defeat the enemy. For this, I shall have much use for the very rich collection of the British Museum, a collection that is not found anywhere else, for which reason I shall still remain here for a long time. From here it is easy for me to go to Belgium, Sweden and Norway, by way of Holland, Germany and Denmark."

According to a Tagalog parable which Rizal quoted in a letter written in Europe sometime in October, 1891, "Tunay at masama ang panahon, payat ang lupá, mabálang, magbagyó at inililipad ng hañgin ang tanim, ñguni at sa kaiingat ay may palos na matutuklasan." (It is true that the weather is bad, the land is barren, there are many locusts, it is stormy, and the plants are being carried by the wind; but if the field is well prepared, an eel is usually found in it.) Rizal also had occasion to quote the English adage "Do not leave for tomorrow what you can do today," in a letter to Ferdinand Blumentritt dated at Brussels, July 5, 1890, by way of advertence to the Spanish government to immediately effect reforms in the administration of the Philippines before it was too late.