

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

by
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From an address delivered at Saginaw Arthur Hill High School, Saginaw, Michigan. Permission granted by the author to the WETMORE DECLAMATION BUREAU, Sioux City, Iowa.

. . . I realize that the old, time-honored way of addressing High School graduates is to preach generalities--and let the individual apply them as he may. Generalities are easy to preach but hard to practice. And so, I choose rather to reverse these precedents by first selecting a few specific examples of the kind of men we long to be, and then pointing out the qualities which brought these men success. Surely with such a picture before him anyone can paint his ideals of the future with a broader brush...

Have you an ambition to become a great financier? Do you wish to have the scratch of your pen heard in all the money markets of the world? Then remember that Armour and Rockefeller and Carnegie and Ford and Astor and Vanderbilt were all poor boys who worked their way, by the hardest kind of toil, to the very top of the financial world. Labor was the key which they used to unlock the chests of fortune.

Have you an ambition to become a great lawyer? Then remember that Webster and Douglas and Lincoln and Choate all started at the bottom, and hour by hour and day by day by incessant labor gradually rose to distinction.

Have you an ambition to become a great surgeon? Do you long for the skill to alleviate suffering and preserve human life? Then remember that McDowell and Morton and Gross and Mayo all rose to prominence by the closest and most persistent application of both mind and body. Labor was the open secret of their successful careers.

Have you an ambition to become a great merchant? Do you wish to have your goods, wares and merchandise used in the homes of our people all over this land? Then remember that Field and Wanamaker and Sears and Woolworth and Kresge all started in small stores and with limited capital, and fought their way, step by step, through years of the keenest kind of competition, to the very top of the merchant world. Labor was the silent partner of every one of them.

Have you an ambition to become a great scientist? Then remember that Thomas A. Edison, the most useful inventor of his age, slept only six hours out of every twenty-four and devoted the balance of his time to research in his vast laboratories, becoming so absorbed at times as not to realize that the hours were passing until he was startled by the rising sun, having worked the whole night through.

And so, you see, that America's greatest men gradually rose to distinction through the genius hard work--and there is no other genius.

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