

Life

by J.R. Miller

Transcript

A twofold influence attends and follows every life: the one is planned and intentional, the other is unpurposed and unconscious.

A man lives fifty years of active life in a community, growing from poverty to wealth; and there are two classes of results left behind him when he is gone. There are the buildings he has erected, the business he has established and organized, the improvements he has made in the town, and the wealth he has accumulated; these are all purposed results. He lived to do these things; he thought about them, and then with labor and pains wrought them out. But while he has been toiling and building, with earnest ambition and intense energy, he has, day by day, been leaving behind him another class of results, which were not in his plans, and the columns of which he does not calculate up when he estimates how much he has made during his life, or which he does not bequeath when he writes his will. These are the things he has done along the years of his busy life, by the words he has spoken in daily fellowship with men, by his attitudes and his dispositions, by the little wayside ministries which he has wrought oftentimes without conscious thought or intention, and through the silent influence that has flowed forth from his character and example, as fragrance is poured out on the air by a sweet flower, or as the soft beams of light stream in welcome radiance from a star.

Every life has this double history, and leaves this double record. In the ordinary reckoning of the results achieved by men—only the purposed things are counted. We say he made a million dollars; or we point to the bridges he built, or the cathedrals he planned, or the pictures he painted, or the books he wrote; or we say he traveled so many miles, and preached so many sermons, and made so many visits; or we sum up in our funeral eulogy the great and conspicuous things of his career—and we think we have given all his biography; but we have not. There is a part of his history that is never written, that cannot be written; and it is probable that in nearly every life—this is the better part, that a godly man\

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