

80 SOMETHING TO DO

(Reprint of the last 26 lines of "Nothing to Do")

O, ye who in life are content to be drones,
And stand idly by while your fellows bear stones
To rear the great temple which Adam began,
Whereof the All-Father has given each man
A part in the building - pray look the world through,
And say, if you can, you have nothing to do!
Were man sent here solely to eat, drink, and sleep,
And sow only that which he himself hoped to reap, -
If, provided his toil served to gain his subsistence,
He had answered in full the whole end of existence, -
Where then would be poets, philanthropists, sages,
Who have written their names high on History's pages?
They stood not aloof from the battle of Life,
But, placing themselves in the van of the strife,
Marching manfully forward with banner unfurled,
Left their deeds and their names a bequest to the world.
Have you ever (forgive me the bold impropriety)
Reckoned up your outstanding account with society,
Or considered how far, should your life close to-morrow,
You would merit her real and genuine sorrow?
If, in dying, the world be no wiser or better
For your having lived there, then you are her debtor;
And if, as Faith, Reason, and Scripture, all show,
God rewards us in heaven for the good done below,
I pray you take heed, idle worldling, lest you
With that better world should have nothing to do!

Source:

Christian Register, September 12, 1857.

The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr., 1985.

