

The Price of Progress

Adeline Champney

September 1907

Young brother, young sister, with the uplift gaze,
Would you follow the new vision, live the new life?
Have you conceived an ideal beyond old creeds and customs?
Does it call you? Would you follow? Count the cost!
Has poverty no terrors for you?
Can you be driven from shelter to shelter till "home" is an empty name,
And can you still be true?
Can you hunger while prostitution feasts and flourishes,
And keep your genius pure?
Have you reckoned with the world's scorn, and counted it as naught?
Can you discount the averted gaze where once shone welcome?
Still I say to you — Count the cost!
Do you know the price you shall pay for your freedom?
A sword shall sever you from kindred, friends, lovers.
Not one who is not of the new, not one of the old can hold you or be held.
One by one you shall sacrifice them on the altar of your progress,
In a long-drawn agony of pain.
Your very blood shall cry out to you for cruelty.
Your throat shall ache with pity, but they will never understand.
The reproach in their eyes shall haunt your sweetest joys,
And your veriest triumphs shall ring with their defeats.
They whom you love, love, love!
Can you pay for your progress the price of their pain?
Then go on, on, on! and die, still going on!
For you shall never arrive!

But you shall gain? Strength that grows by resistance, power that is born of purpose;
A deeper insight, a clearer understanding, a greater love.
And here and there, along steep hillsides, beside yawning chasms,
A warm hand shall clasp yours,
Clear eyes shall look into yours with the look that knows and responds,

And you shall claim comrades, yours, your own!
You may not keep them with you, but you shall know
That somewhere on the pathway they too are climbing,
They too are pursuing the dream and the vision,
And in you shall be born a living, leaping Hope that into the pain and the yearning,
Into the world's weariness and woe,
A new light shall dawn, a new day shall break;
That, whether you stand or fall, the world shall grow by your striving;
That slowly, but with onward sweep of endeavor,
On into Freedom and Joy-life, the World is advancing!

ADELINE CHAMPNEY.

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