

For a long journey,
entrusted three of his



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

For example, a blind man cannot help his blindness; but, instead of allowing it to cripple his life and make him miserable, he may use every means possible to minimize his loss of sight (for example, by learning to read by the Braille system), and by cultivating other powers and a cheerful spirit. But the phrase has also a slightly different meaning, which may be illustrated by one of Jesus Christ's parables. He once told a story of a rich man who, before he started on a long journey, entrusted three of his servants with sums of money to trade with during his absence. To one who was a smart fellow, he gave five talents (a large sum); to another, who was a man of average ability, he gave two talents; and to the third, who was inferior to others, he gave only one talent. When their master had departed, the first two servants at once started business, and traded so successfully that by the time he returned each had doubled his capital.

But the third servant, who was timid and lazy, did nothing with his one talent except to keep it safe. When the master came home, he gave exactly the same words of praise and the same reward to the second servant, who presented him with four talents, as he did to the first, who presented him with ten. But the third servant, who had done nothing, and who simply gave back the one talent he had received, he blamed severely as "slothful and unprofitable", and dismissed him from his service. Now in this story the first two servants made the best of things-they made the best of their natural gifts and opportunities. People's natural abilities, and the opportunities for advancement self-improvement and good work which their circumstances, provide, are very different. Some are clever and have great opportunities, like the first servant; some are endowed with only average ability and limited

opportunities; and some are very poor in both. And in trying to make the best of things, people are exposed to two opposite temptations.

The first servant might have argued, that because he was so clever he need not make any great efforts to trade with the large sum entrusted to him; and if he had so argued, he would not have made the best of things. This is the temptation to over-confidence, and leads to carelessness and failure. On the other hand, the second servant might have argued, as the third servant actually did, that his gifts and opportunities were so small that it was not worth while trying to use them at all. This is the temptation of diffidence and timidity, which leads to giving up all efforts in despair. The third servant was blamed, not because he could not produce ten talents, or even four, like his cleverer brothers, but because he did not even try to do anything. It is implied that, if he had made the best of things, he could at least have made his one talent into two. But both of the first two servants did their best and made the most of the capital entrusted to them; and so, though the results they produced were unequal, they were treated as equal by their master.

Even if we have only one talent, that is, very limited abilities and small opportunities, we must strive to make the most of them. For it is not the actual things we achieve that matter, but the spirit in which we work.