

# 23

## Learning from Hardship

I WOULD LIKE TO QUOTE again from William Shakespeare, our greatest English dramatist, poet and philosopher.

In his play “As You Like It”, he tells the story of a good nobleman who had to sacrifice his comfortable life and live in a forest, to escape his cruel, jealous elder brother. In the forest, the good brother found peace and freedom, saying:

“Sweet are the uses of adversity, which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, wears yet a precious jewel in its head.” Yes, even from the unhappiest misfortunes, we may learn some precious lessons.

Consider, for example, the hardships suffered by the Hong Kong people during World War Two. Some brave Hong Kong citizens risked their lives to take food to starving prisoners-of-war. Many others left their homes to go to Mainland China to defend their country. Even though the people were short of food, many would share what they had with relatives and friends.

During that war, when Britain was in great danger of being invaded, many fishermen and others who had small boats, risked their lives to rescue British soldiers stranded on the shores of Europe.

Besides wartime, there are many other kinds of adversity from which we can learn useful lessons. Some old and sick

persons have no relatives to take care of them. They need someone to help to shop for them, cook their food, or clean their homes. Their lives can be made more comfortable and valuable if volunteers help them with these chores.

None of us welcome adversity, yet we can learn useful lessons from it. The recent economic crisis taught some of us not to waste money on luxuries. Some of us learned to enjoy the simple pleasures of life, such as walking in the countryside to admire the beauties of nature. That good nobleman in Shakespeare’s play found “tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.”

Every experience in our lives, whether good or bad, can teach us a lesson from which to build up our characters. We should face up to whatever comes into our lives, and learn some good lesson from it.