

2 Keys to a Successful Career

No time is more uselessly employed than in listening to advice on this subject. Ralph Waldo Emerson declared, "The soul's emphasis is always right," and I would add that the emphasis of any soul, the decision of any mind except one's own, is far more likely to work disaster than to bring satisfaction or success.

Yet every girl wants a career that will bring success. The difficulty is in determining what that means, for to scarcely two people in the world would it be represented by the same thing.

"Would you exchange places with that woman, performing her duties and receiving her income?" I asked a poorly remunerated literary toiler, in reference to one of the buyers in a large dry goods establishment, who earned several thousand dollars a year.

"Never!" was the quick reply. "I should rather write for \$3 a week than to bargain for fabrics and faces at a hundred.'"

No amount of money, on the one hand, or of literary creation, however largely rewarded, on the other, would have made the work of one of these women a success for the other.

The shivering, starving, disappointed life of the artist Jean-François Millet, whose hardships continued till nearly the end of his days, was to the painter of *The Angelus* a greater success than would have been represented by the millions made by industrialist Cornelius Vanderbilt, had he been obliged to employ Vanderbilt's methods to secure them.

Do you think that to ornithologist John James Audubon, to whom knowing every bird of the forest by the shade of its feathers or the fibre of its notes was of utmost importance, the splendid triumphs of inventor Thomas Edison would have meant

success? And to the master of the lightning what could have seemed less like success than to become accurately acquainted with the habits of birds?

Success is ever an individual thing.

What career shall you choose? The career that has chosen you—the work that means success to you. In this choice lies your only safety, since there is no real dynamic power outside one's soul.

The talent is the call, a call that can remain unheeded only with the direst results. Suppose that the literary worker, tempted by visions of gain, had attempted a commercial life? Or that the buyer of fabrics, motivated by thoughts of fame, had undertaken to become a writer?

What if Millet had chosen a mercantile career? Audubon to master the secrets of electricity? Edison to become a naturalist? The chances are that each would have met with complete financial failure and missed satisfaction as well because the person was attempting work he or she was not born to do.

No one can effectively handle that which does not belong to him. Pythagoras, the learned philosopher and mathematician, had no wiser rule than this: "That which concerns me I will attend to. That which concerns me not I will let alone."

Some women are tempted to choose a career because they believe the work is genteel. Remember that to be truly genteel, work must be genteelly done; that it is not the occupation itself, but the manner of handling it that makes it fine or unfine work.

A book written by a born milliner will not be a fine book. A bonnet trimmed by one appointed to be a poet will not rank among works of art. Many a girl can handle cooking utensils genteelly whose painting would be a bungle. Many a splendid

stenographer would distract the neighborhood by her music.

The Rules of Life

The first rule of life should be: Work according to your ideals.

One day two women who were driving in a New Hampshire town rode up to the door of a farmhouse to ask for directions. While the lady of the house stood by their carriage, a man approached whose outfit bore but a faint resemblance to anything usually worn by mortals.

"Where," asked one of the ladies respectfully, "does your husband get his clothes?"

"I make 'em," was the reply.

"And where do you get your patterns?" was the next question.

"Oh," answered the wife, " I don't bother with patterns. I just glance at Johnson once in a while and cut."

"Life is all a misfit," a young woman said to me one day, expressing a feeling experienced by a number of people who had sought my counsel. After she had taken her departure, I pondered why so many were finding existence inadequate, ineffective and unsatisfactory. I realized that the disaster was, in many cases, due to the same cause that clothed Johnson so uncouthly: want of patterns.

Have you ever known of anyone who accomplished a satisfactory piece of work without a pattern? Everything, from the largest to the least, that grows under the hand of the sculptor or painter, is formed from a model, which is either actualized or in the mind. The story, the play, the essay, exist in outline before they are written.

You could not fashion the simplest gown nor cut the plainest apron without either a material or a mental pattern. If you

tried to do this you would inevitably produce a shapeless and partially or wholly useless thing.

The entire world owes its strength, its utility, its beauty, its "every good and perfect gift," to patterns, or ideals. What is a pattern? Something to fashion after and compare with.

As the sculptor chips the marble he keeps his model constantly in sight. No stroke of the painter's brush is made without reference to his sketch. The author's every sentence is written with his outline in mind.

If one of you were cutting a garment you would pin your cloth to the pattern and be very careful that your shears did not go here and there aimlessly, or cut a piece too wide or too narrow, or cut out of proportion or relation to the whole. And yet many a young woman is trying to fashion that most stupendous thing, a character, that most marvelous thing, an effective and noble life, without a pattern. Her shears are running everywhere and nowhere, her chisel is gouging and defacing, or is idle; her picture has no central figure, or no consistency.

Such a young woman should begin at once to possess herself of a pattern! She should stop her aimless and defacing hacking, and begin to chisel by rule.

Don't hesitate to set perfection as your standard. If you never reach it you will get much higher than those whose aims are lower. And write this sentence in your minds in letters of fire so that they will become a part of your inmost consciousness: You will never be larger than your thought.

Little patterns make little productions; uncertain patterns bring forth uncertain results; half-patterns give half-realizations. A perfect thing must have a perfect pattern.

Imagination is nearly always spoken of by the unthinking as a

misty and unimportant thing, or is regarded as reprehensible. "Don't let your imagination run away with you" is a sentence that has chilled, if not checked, the enthusiasm of most of us. But imagination is the master-builder of your most satisfactory life-structure, and when it "runs away with" you, it becomes the most powerful dynamic in the world.

What does imagination mean? Imaging, building a thought-pattern, a mental model, an ideal.

"Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm," asserts Emerson.

Imagination is enthusiasm's vital principle, its inward life, its kindling fire.

We have the electric telegraph and the submarine cable because imagination gave Samuel Morse and Cyrus Field no rest till the world-revolutionizing messages were clicked and flashed out in intelligible signs. We ride, and cook our food, and light our homes by electricity because imagination gripped Moses Farmer and Edison. The Red Cross and the White Cross movements, and many other things of worldwide worth, came into existence because in the minds and souls of such women as Clara Barton and Florence Nightingale and Jennie Collins imagination refused to be bridled.

Never be afraid of imagination!

The second rule of life should be: Focus your energies.

I believe it is an entirely demonstratable fact that more failures in life have been caused by want of direct aim and concentration than by lack of ability or opportunity. In every life which is to be a success the less must always be sacrificed to the greater.

It may be urged that there are professions, such as those of the author, the painter, the musician, that can yield a

livelihood only after years of toil, and that in the meantime a young woman must engage in other occupations to earn her daily bread. True!

But if she keeps her main object steadily in view, keeps working toward it in spare hours by the occasional story or sketch, the sometimes picture, the interspersed hour of music, and by the conscientious performance of her enforced, bread-winning duties, learns consecration, and absorbs whatever knowledge comes by her touch with a side of life different from that which she has chosen, she will ultimately attain her goal.

In no life can any kind of knowledge come amiss. One must live worthily and widely before her pen or brush or bow can speak intelligently and worthily of worthy and wide things.

Clearly, the life I describe is a hard and strenuous one. But the work one loves, and which is born hers, hard and strenuous though it may be, is the most satisfying thing which will ever come to her.

Those who have chosen the careers that have chosen them will bear testimony to this truth. True living and real achieving can never be anything but earnest work, but it may be very far removed from unpleasantness.

And if you watch other lives you will learn, as every careful observer must, that one bears far less hardship in living the life of soul-whiteness and effective accomplishment than in trailing out a careless, heart-spotted existence, which leads to no desirable goal. The way of the transgressor of any law of holiness, of constancy, of courtesy, is hard. Life everywhere proves this.

The man who seeks for precious gems digs no deeper, fares no harder, waits no later, than he who delves after common stones, but in the end the one with the higher goal holds in

his hand not merely a pretty rock—but a diamond!

Read a companion devotional.

Frances E. Willard, born *Frances Elizabeth Caroline Willard* (1839-1898), was one of the most influential women in 19th-century America. She worked tirelessly to bring about social reform in this country and around the world. Her efforts were instrumental in securing the passage of the 18th (Prohibition) and 19th (Women Suffrage) Amendments to the United States Constitution.