LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

VOLUME THREE



The Hour of Opportunity

"A determined individual will find a way, or make one."

ORISON SWETT MARDEN

Edited and narrated by Richard Gorham

Leadership-Tools.com

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The Hour of Opportunity

Based on the original edition of
The Hour of Opportunity (1900)

ORISON SWETT MARDEN
Author of Pushing to the Front

Edited for ebook and audio by
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Leadership-Tools.com

ABOUT THIS EDITION

Orison Swett Marden published *The Hour of Opportunity* in 1900. Richard Gorham edited it for ebook and audio in 2006. He shortened some passages and brought parts of the language closer to the way people talk today. This 2026 edition keeps that text and gives it a new design, with a contents page that links to each chapter.

The audio edition and the companion workbook are free at Leadership-Tools.com. The audio covers the seven chapters of the book, and the workbook follows the same chapters, with a summary of key points and questions for each one.

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CHAPTER I

The Hour of Opportunity: Are You Ready for It?

THE STATUE OF LYSIPPUS

"To take Time by the forelock" - meaning to take hold of Opportunity just as you would grab a robber by the hair on top of his head, is considered one of the first metaphors known to Greek art. It was the work of the sculptor Lysippus, a contemporary of Alexander the Great.

The famous bronze named “Take Time By The Forelock” was lost, but one who saw it has described the glorious statue of a man as follows:

Opportunity, he was a boy in the flower of his youth; handsome in appearance, his hair fluttered at the whim of the wind, leaving his locks untidy. His forehead shone with grace, and his cheeks glowed with youthful splendor. With wings on his feet and shoulders to indicate swiftness, he stood upon a sphere, resting upon the tips of his toes as if ready for flight. His hair fell in thick curls from his brow, easy to lay hold upon; but upon the back of his head no hair was present, and when he had once

passed by, it was not possible to seize him. One hand is balancing a set of scales on the edge of a razor, while the other hand is adjusting the scales.

"Opportunity" – the belief that one must seek out and take advantage of the right time to do something. This main idea was a gift from Lysippus to all mankind. He believed that our affairs are indeed, on the razor's edge, meaning, "Now is the time for decision, and time will not wait."

An old poem, written by an unknown source, gives us a more vivid idea of the significance of the statue:

> "What art thou?" "Time, the all-subduer."
> "Why standest on thy tiptoes?" "I speed ever."
> "Why thy double wings on each foot?" "I fly with the wind."
> "In thy hand, why that razor?" "'Tis a sign to men
> That quicker than any edge am I."
> "But why thy hair over the eye?" "To be grasped by him who
> meets me."
> "The back of thy head, why bald?"
> "When once I have rushed by, with winged feet,
> One can never grasp me from behind."
> "Why made thee the artist thus?" "For thy sake,
> O stranger, he placed this warning lesson in the doorway,"

A CHILD OF CIRCUMSTANCES

"Man," says Mathews, "is to a great extent the child of opportunity. Estimate as we may the chances of the individual and his

achievement of success, there is yet another factor in the equation, the power of circumstances, which we cannot wholly ignore."

To support Mathews' claim, I supply the following example, taken from an incident that occurred during the reign of George IV. A village doctor by chance visited the state apartments at a time when his majesty was experiencing a seizure. The chance visitor drew the royal blood and brought the king back to consciousness and by his friendly and quaint humor he made his somewhat despondent ruler laugh aloud. The monarch took a liking to him, and made him his royal physician; so the doctor's fortune was "made," as was common to say at the time.

Now we may say what we will in regard to the good doctor; there were multitudes of men in his calling quite as competent as he, who did not "happen" to visit the state apartments at this critical juncture. However, this singular opportunity made the difference between him and the others. At the same time, it is plain enough that the education of the doctor was an essential element; and if he had not been well prepared for his opportunity when it came, his ignorance and incompetence would have been displayed to the highest degree and the opportunity would have been useless to him.

This is further illustrated by an often told anecdote of Ole Bull. During many years the eminent violinist had been practicing upon his favorite instrument, and this practice had properly equipped him for the fame which later came; but at this time he

was still obscure and unknown to the general public as a musician. Yet his opportunity came in this way:

The eminent songstress Malibran once passed a window at which Ole Bull, the youth from Norway, was playing; and it seemed to her that she had never heard the violin give forth such exquisite music. She inquired for the name of the unknown young man. And not long after, when she disappointed her audience at a concert, through some sudden argument with her manager, Ole Bull was sent for to entertain the large audience that had gathered; and his playing in that single hour placed him near the head of the musical world. It was to him the hour of opportunity, and he was prepared for it.

This point is further illustrated by the story which has been eloquently told by George Cary Eggleston. It is concerning the servant-boy Antonio, who was not only an occasional stone-cutter, but who had become greatly skilled in the use of his tools. Usually serving as a mere servant-boy in the kitchen, he was absolutely unknown to fame. Once when his master invited many friends to a banquet, the ornamental work, which was to be prepared by the confectioner for the center of the table, was ruined. His master was very concerned that his table would not be properly set. At this juncture the stone-cutter boy offered to supply what was lacking. Calling for a large quantity of butter, he quickly molded an impressive crouching lion, which was placed upon the table. The merchants and princely guests at the party were some of the most skilled critics of art, and when their eyes fell upon the lion made of butter they marveled at this work of “a

genius", and asked their host what eminent sculptor had prepared it. When the confectioner told the story, the host declared that he would pay Antonio's expenses to pursue artistic studies; and the servant-boy, who was prepared for his opportunity when it came, is now known in the history of art by the name of Canova, one of the greatest sculptors of all time. If the boy had not been ready for his opportunity when it came, he would have lived and died a servant-boy.

PROFESSOR SARGENT AT FIVE DOLLARS

The opportunity was the main thing in the mind of Professor Sargent, the director of the gymnasium at Harvard University. His opportunity came when he was an obscure student at Bowdoin College, preparing for his great life work.

"During the first year," he explained, "while attending to the duties of the gymnasium and preparing to enter college, I did my own janitorial work. Entering the freshman class at Bowdoin in 1871, two years after, I took charge of the gymnasium and continued to work my way through college. I graduated in 1875. It was at this time that I became passionate for inventing. The apparatus in the gym was heavy and cumbersome, a new solution was needed, and I began to remodel or modify old pieces of equipment and invent new ones. Before the close of my first year in the gymnasium we gave an exhibition which attracted so much attention and was so far ahead of anything that had been previously known that my salary was immediately raised; and the next year, on the strength of the work I was doing at Bowdoin, I was invited to go to Yale University at a salary of sixty dollars a week."

Having spoken at length, the professor made the point that the seizing of an opportunity is of the utmost importance, even though the immediate compensation may seem small and inadequate at the time: "It is not the value of their services to which men should look", he continued, "but to the opportunity offered. Many a young fellow would refuse to take a situation at five dollars a week as I did, feeling that his work was worth far more; but Bowdoin and five dollars a week opened the way to Yale and sixty dollars a week." In 1872 Professor Sargent became the instructor in gymnastics at Yale University, and for the following three years had charge of the gymnasiums both at Yale and at Bowdoin. He later took the entire responsibility at Yale, and subsequently became the director of the Harvard gymnasium; and he was remembered and recognized throughout the country as the most eminent instructor in his department.

TWO DOLLARS AND A GOOD CHANCE

The point that I would make in regard to the preparation of our youth for the opportunities of life is further illustrated by the story which I found in the "Youth's Companion" magazine. The story is of John Grant, who worked in a hardware store at two dollars a week. It was said to him by his employers, upon his entering their store: "Make yourself useful by becoming acquainted with all the details of this business; and as fast as you prove yourself capable, we will recognize your services in some way."

After several weeks young Grant, who had been closely watching, observed that his employer always attended to the checking of the bills of imported foreign goods. These were in

French and German. He set to work to study the bills, and to learn commercial French and German in which they were written. One day, when his employer was much pressed for time, Grant offered to do the checking for him; and he did it so well that the next bills which came in were handed to him almost immediately.

One day, a month later, he was called into the office and interviewed by both the active members of the firm. The senior member said: "In my forty years' experience in this business you are the first boy who has seen this opportunity and improved it. I always had to do the work until Mr. Williams came, and one reason why he became a member of the firm was because he could attend to this part of the business. We want you to take charge of the foreign goods. It is an important position; in fact, it is a matter of necessity that we have someone who can do this work. Only you, out of the twenty young men we have here, saw the opportunity, and prepared yourself for it."

His pay was advanced to ten dollars a week; in five years he received eighteen hundred dollars salary, and had been sent to France and Germany. "John Grant," said his employer, "will probably become a member of the firm at thirty. He saw the opportunity, and equipped himself to manage the task, and it took some sacrifice; but it paid off. It always pays to be prepared."

"The accurate boy is always the favored one," said President Tuttle, of the Boston and Maine Railroad. "I do not wish to employ men who will not work to help improve my organization.

Care-less men are liabilities and they act as though their employer is nothing more than an idiot, or a fool. If a carpenter must stand at the elbow of his worker to be certain that his work is right, or if a store owner must double-check his bookkeeper's formulas, he might as well do the work himself rather than employ another to do it in that way; and it is very certain that the employer will get rid of such a blunderer as soon as he can."

GEORGE W. CHILDS AT FIFTY CENTS A WEEK NET

When George W. Childs was only twelve years old he went to work in Philadelphia, where he received only enough money to pay for his room and still have fifty cents left. Childs earned just twenty-five dollars a year for all his outside expenses. Yet it was an opportunity; and so he worked very hard to make the most of it.

"I did not merely do the work I was required to do," he said, "but I did all that I could, and put my whole heart into it. I wanted my employer to feel that I was more useful to him than he expected me to be. I was not afraid to make fires, clean and sweep, and to perform what some young gentlemen nowadays consider as menial work and therefore beneath them. It was while I was working here as an errand boy that I made the most of the opportunity to read multitudes of books; and I attended book sales at night, so that I could learn the market value of books and anything else that might be useful later on in my business as a bookseller. I fixed my ambition high, so that I might at least be always moving in an upward direction.

"I lived near a theater, and many of the actors knew me, so I could have gone in and witnessed the performances. Other boys did it, and I would have liked to have done it; but I thought it over, and concluded that I would not, and I never did. A young man should not yield to any temptation to relax his efforts when preparing for his business, solely for the purpose of amusing himself. At least that was the way I looked at it. I was always cheerful, and took a keen interest in my work, and took pleasure in doing it well."

"When after some time I secured an office in the Public Ledger building, I said to myself, 'Some time I will own that paper;' and I directed my work in such a way that when the time came I was able to buy it, and I was also able to manage it properly."

It should be noted that young Childs, very early on, made up his mind to prepare himself for every opportunity that might come to him in the publishing business. He deliberately chose to do prepare himself, and that he would not allow himself to be diverted from it by giving attention to many of the amusements which diverted so many young men in the big cities. He was young and strong and always displayed a cheerful temperament. While he did not seek out the same kinds of entertainment that so many of his peers desired, he did have an insatiable need to understand about the publishing business and to be faithful to his employer, and to earn and to save money until he was prepared for the greater opportunities which came to him in later life. His wonderful career, his accumulation of a great fortune,

his wise use of his resources, his practical benevolence, his warm and friendly and useful life, were all related to these decisions of his very early teens and young adulthood when he was preparing for his opportunity.

A VERY EMINENT LONG ISLAND SWITCHMAN

Mr. Herbert Vreeland was responsible for the transportation of a million passengers a day in New York City. He received as a Valentine present from his associates $100,000 in recognition of his superb management of the properties entrusted to his care. Many New Yorkers then learned for the first time what railroad experts throughout the country had long known; that the transportation of a million passengers a day in New York's busy streets, without serious friction or public annoyance, was not a matter of chance. Rather, is was the result of the most effective traffic organization ever created. At the head of this organization was one man - quiet, yet forcible, with all the ability of a great general, — the master, and at the same time the friend to all the public for which he so loyally served.

Mr. Vreeland, as a lad of thirteen, worked with a gang of men at filling the city ice carts; and once in his early youth he drove a grocery wagon. When he entered the railroad business at eighteen years old he shoveled gravel on the cars of the Long Island Railroad night construction trains. This was he believed, his great opportunity. He had been ambitious to become a railroad man, and was determined to make the most of it. After a few months he was given a job of inspecting the railroad ties and

roadbeds, at a dollar a day. "I then felt," he said, "that I was well upon my way to the presidency of the corporation."

He was soon made into a switchman. The Bushwick station being not far away, he made the acquaintance of the officials there, and offered to help them in their clerical work at any and all times when he was off switch duty. It was exactly what they wanted; and what he wanted, — for he was determined to learn the railroad business from bottom to top. "Many a time," he said, "I worked till eleven or twelve o'clock at night in that little station, figuring out train receipts and expenses, engine cost and freight and passenger statistics of all kinds; and as a result of this work I quickly acquired a knowledge of railroad details in all its stages, which few managers possessed. I sought to acquire a knowledge for every branch of the business."

This was his opportunity, yet his switchman work was temporary, since it was connected with a construction train, so when the work was completed he was discharged. "This did not suit me at all," he said. "I went to one of the officials of the road and told him that I wanted to remain with the Long Island Railroad Company in any capacity whatsoever, and would be obliged to him if he would give me work. He said at first that he had nothing for me to do; but finally added that if I were willing to work on another division and sweep out and dust cars, he might have something. I instantly accepted, and thereby learned the details of another important railroad department. Pretty soon they made me a brakeman on an early mail train; and then I found out what I was worth to the world. After two full years of railroad training,

I was worth just forty dollars a month. I paid eighteen dollars for room and board, and sent twenty dollars home for the support of my mother and sister."

It soon began to be understood by Yreeland's companions on the road that he was a young man with a strong ambition, who intended to become president of the railroad, — and "President Vreeland" was the name by which he was known to the boys. It was told to him that he might someday become a conductor, but he would never go any further in his career. When he did become a conductor he was advanced over the heads of many older brakemen on account of his superior knowledge and skills. But there was an accident one day, for which he and the engineer were jointly responsible. They admitted their responsibility, and were both immediately discharged. "I went again to the superintendent," said Mr. Vreeland, "and upon a strong plea to be retained, he sent me back to the ranks of the brakemen. I made no complaint, but accepted the consequences of my mistake." Soon the railroad passed into other hands, and the new managers were quick to discover that Vreeland was a man of unusual capacity, and this was tested at an early date.

When the railroad again changed hands it was found that the general manager, who did not understand the details of railroading, had to depend largely upon Mr. Vreeland's experience to enable him to carry on his work. After this, when men in high positions began to know him personally and to observe his work, Mr. Vreeland was found to be the one man who was most needed for

managing the details of the Metropolitan Railway Company of New York.

In regard to this most remarkable career it is to be said that there was an opportunity and a capacity, and that Mr. Vreeland always had in him the ability to do what he later accomplished.

In a speech Mr. Vreeland said: "No artificial condition can ever, in my judgment, keep down a man who has health, capacity, and honesty. You can temporarily interfere with him or make the road to the object of his ambition more difficult, but you cannot stop him. The successful man will never be silenced, his will to press on is never dead, and because he knows it he possesses a great enlightenment that will bring him power and wealth. Instead of preventing a man from rising, there is not an employer in the entire world that is not today eagerly seeking to identify and retain the services of highly capable people. The great hunger of the time is for good and strong men and women, people capable of assuming responsibility; and there is great opportunity for those who are willing to prepare themselves."

CHAPTER II

What the Employers Say

It is a common saying today among employers that the young men who come to them for work are not prepared for the opportunities which arise. Opportunity, in connection with a man's line of business; will be wasted if the worker fails to properly prepare himself for it. When chance opportunity arises he will fail to secure what otherwise might have easily been his for the asking.

It was a saying of Disraeli that the secret of success in life is for a man to be ready for his opportunity when it comes. And I remember when reading the works of Canon Liddon that what we do upon great occasions in the future will probably depend on what we are preparing ourselves for today; and what we are today, is the result of our prior years of self-discipline.

SELF-MADE OR NEVER MADE

In many respects it is true that every man has within himself the capacity needed for all that he may ever wish to accomplish. And if he is a person of small capacity and of low ambition, who never seeks to prepare himself for a higher career, he will never reach any extraordinary level. If it had been Mr. Vreeland's ambition from early life to drive a grocery wagon, he had already attained it when he was ten years old. If he had desired to fill ice carts, he was already doing so when he was thirteen years old. If he had desired to be a switchman on the railroad, and if that was the

height of his ambition, he had already achieved his aim when he was eighteen years old. If he had no further ambition than to become a brake man or a conductor, quite early in life he reached those positions. But upon the other hand, Mr. Vreeland was the man who had it in him to seize upon railroading as his life-long opportunity. He was ready to be a workman on the night construction train shoveling gravel, he was ready to act as a switchman, he was ready to sweep and dust cars, he was ready to be a brakeman, he was ready to be a conductor, he was ready to enter into any and all positions by which he might learn the business. And the business he did learn. While in some respects the opportunity came to him, in the most important sense, it was he who made his own opportunity.

DO NOT WAIT FOR YOUR OPPORTUNITY

Make it, as Lincoln made his in a log cabin in the wilderness. Make it, as Henry Wilson made his opportunity during his evenings on a farm, when he read a thousand books while other boys of the neighborhood wasted their evenings. Make it, as the shepherd boy Ferguson made his when he calculated the distance of the stars with a handful of beads on a string. Make it, as George Stephenson made his when he mastered the rules of mathematics with a bit of chalk on the sides of the coal wagons in the mines. Make your opportunity, as Douglass made his when, while a slave he learned to read from scraps of paper. Make it, as Napoleon made his in a hundred important situations. Make it, as the deaf and blind Helen Keller made her opportunity. Make it, as

every man must who would accomplish anything worth the effort. Golden opportunities are wasted by laziness. The greatest advantage highlights the fool who is not prepared for it.

"When a man 'gets lucky' and acquires a good position, it is because he has been prepared for that work for years, and not merely because he takes advantage of circumstances. Fortune always visits those who are prepared to welcome it."

"The whole period of our youth," said Ruskin, "is a time that should be used for character formation, edification of one's ability to achieve and careful instruction to prepare for life's demands. There is not an hour of it, that does not contribute to a persons outcome in life. Once each day of youth is past, it can never again be utilized. Each day is a gift, another opportunity, that every man and woman should firmly grasp and squeeze as much from it as possible."

SELF-TRAINING

"Nothing," says St Bernard, "can work against me or damage me except myself; the harm I sustain, I am responsible for, as I am my own man and I alone decide what I will allow to affect me in any way."

"Capacity never lacks opportunity," says an eminent statesman; "it cannot remain undiscovered, because it is sought by too many who are anxious to utilize it daily. Whoever undertakes the task of building a house, to cultivate a farm, to work a mine, to obtain relief from pain, to settle a legal controversy, or to perform any useful function in life, is actively watching for every man or woman qualified to aid him in his task.

The person who is skilled, knowledgeable, and capable will be quickly put to good use, and encouraged to employ his talents for the benefit of those who need it. To be successful, then, one only needs to qualify himself thoroughly for the position he seeks. Every man has some natural aptitude. In these days the training by which natural aptitude is developed into effective ability can be obtained by every young person. Time occupied in worrying about opportunities, openings, and getting started, is time wasted; because to every capable man a start and an opportunity are always furnished by the spur of the marketplace and the necessities of other successful men."

Opportunity is the quiet giant that lies dormant in the very foundation of human society. Opportunity is everywhere about us. But the preparation to seize upon the opportunity, and to make the most of it, is to be made by every one for himself. Each person will either be self-made or will go through life a victim of his circumstance. President Garfield once said that, "the call of the bugle summons an army to battle, but the blast of the bugle call can never make soldiers, nor win battles." What is life, after-all, but a training ground for each of us? And what is the most important training but self-training and character building?

INDIVIDUAL CAPACITY

It would be absurd to say we could write an essay or make a book by preparing a list of words at random, simply by opening a dictionary and choosing words here and there. Yet this would be no more absurd than it would be to say that a man is wholly prepared for the opportunities of life by the attainment of certain

qualities, such as punctuality, accuracy, thoroughness, process, execution, and faithfulness. It is assumed that he will have a thorough command of himself in these qualities and more; for behind all these qualities, must be a clear understanding of his line of work. In other words, Mr. Vreeland himself must understand the needs of the man with the shovel, the man behind the switch, the man with the brake, and he must share the concerns of his conductor's and office staff. In addition, to a great extent it will be one's personality and approach in dealing with other people that will determine one's success.

So every youth carries within himself the energy by which he can achieve mastery in his calling. He cannot reach the highest levels solely through the acquisition of certain secondary traits, even though each success trait should indeed be acquired. The man's success depends on these things, along with the special qualities of the man himself. It is the whole man or woman who will find the most opportunity in life.

IRVING's DUTCHMAN

Remember that in whatever way we develop our energies and train ourselves for, it is after all mere training; and life itself is for taking full advantage of the opportunities which come to us. Was it not Washington Irving who told us of a Dutchman who, having to leap a ditch, went back three miles that he might have a good run at it; and he found himself so completely out of breath when he arrived at the ditch that he was obliged to sit down on the wrong side and rest? This would not be very unlike the case of the youth who should spend many years in preparing himself

for his destiny, and who should exhaust himself in doing this and nothing more. I remember hearing about a student in a great school. It was asked of him what he did that was noteworthy when getting an education; it was answered, "I was an early riser." A perfectly healthy young man, more than capable of doing great things, yet all he managed to accomplish was to get up early in the morning, in order to do nothing the rest of the day.

CHAPTER III

Do You Know a Good Thing When You See It?

> To each man's life there comes a time supreme;
> One day, one night, one morning, or one noon,
> One freighted hour, one moment opportune.
> One rift through which sublime fulfillments gleam,
> One space when fate goes tiding with the stream,
> One Once, in balance 'twixt Too Late, Too Soon,
> And ready for the passing instant's boon
> To tip in favor the uncertain beam.
> Ah, happy he who, knowing how to wait,
> Knows also how to watch and work and stand
> On Life's broad deck alert, and at the prow
> To seize the passing moment, big with fate,
> From opportunity's extended hand,
> When the great clock of destiny strikes Now!
> — Mary A. Townsend

> Vigilance in watching opportunity; tact and daring in seizing upon opportunity; force and persistence in crowding opportunity to its utmost of possible achievement — these are the martial virtues which must command success.
> — Austin Phelps.

Every man knows that there are moments upon which hang the destiny of years. It is only for the moment that the favorable opportunity is presented. If we miss it, months, years, even decades are lost.

What is the doing of a deed but the sowing of a seed? If it is not sown at the right time, it will not germinate. How priceless are the sunny days of youth, so rich in opportunity. Is it not always the nick of time for an active-minded youth?

His brain cells and nerves are still forming, and it is easy to make an impression upon his mind. It's important that the youth's activities are regulated so that his success will be as certain as water is wet to the touch. The determining moment is often very brief, and if we are on the watch for all opportunity, and always ready to seize it, it will make all the difference to us between success and failure.

THE HINGE

It was said by Emerson of Napoleon, "He sees where the matter hinges." The power of perception is indeed a wonderful gift. It was a soldier during the Civil War who observed a bird hulling rice. He took the bill of that bird for his model, and invented a hulling machine, which revolutionized the rice business. Professor Benedict, a teacher of Latin, upon first hearing the click of the typewriter, cried to himself, "Eureka." He at once took in the possibilities of the invention. Throwing his Latin away, he began to manufacture the Remington typewriter, so useful, and to him so profitable.

Col. William L. Strong, of Ohio, was far-sighted. When he was earning a salary of $3,000 a year, a great wool merchant invited him to take a position in his store at $1,200 a year. While many young men at the time would have scoffed at such an outrageous offer, Strong saw more in the opportunity than a reduction to his

current pay. He saw how the opportunity to work under such a successful man would provide him with the education and experience necessary to someday strike out on his own and one day even surpass his new mentor. Strong was far-sighted enough to see that this business opening was an opportunity worth far more than the $3,000 a year, and he promptly accepted the pay reduction of $1,800 a year in his salary. As a result of his forward thinking, he later became the head of that woolen house.

HOW ADMIRAL DEWEY GOT HIS CHANCE

The true story of the manner in which Admiral Dewey got his assignment to sea duty, and as a result became world-famous, is of exceptional interest. I am indebted for the facts to Hon. Thomas S. King, of Buffalo, whose statement follows:

"Before the Spanish-American war broke out, the air in Washington was full of excitement for the officers of both the army and the navy. Active service was sought after, and everybody wanted to go to fight. The naval men, in particular, grew restless, for they saw chances ahead. They were in the habit of dropping into the business office of my nephew, on Sixteenth street, nearly midway between the clubs and the department buildings. It was there, one afternoon, that Dewey, Porter, and a few others began discussing the prospects of war and their own chances. Porter was an Annapolis graduate who had gone with the South at the outbreak of the Civil War. He was the first Confederate officer to come over the side of Farragut's flagship after the fight at Mobile, and Dewey and the other Annapolis boys aboard the flagship were the first to greet him. They have been

friends ever since. Well, on this particular afternoon Dewey was emphasizing the fact that he would soon be on the retired list, and that if he did not get a trip of sea duty he would die in his bureau. 'Why don't you try for it?' said Porter. 'I have,' he replied, 'but they won't change the seniority rule. I am doomed to grow old in the bureau; but I know I could do something if I could just once get a whack at the Spaniards.'

'Go to Proctor,' suggested the ex-Confederate; 'he stands well with the people down the street.'

"Proctor and Dewey were both fellows of Vermont, so off went the naval officer to see the senator. Proctor called on Secretary Long the next day. 'No,' said the secretary, 'I cannot do such a thing; he must take his turn. Every one wants to go, even the retired folks.' But Senator Proctor went straight to the President. 'Do you want this very much, senator?' the President asked. 'Yes, because George Dewey is from my State, and he says the chap that gets the first chance to meet the Spaniards will settle the dispute.'

'All right,' said the President; ' I'll order it done.' And he did."

This report was right in line exactly with the President's declaration that he had given Dewey his opportunity; and the details are vouched for by the naval officers who continued to rendezvous at Mr. King's office.

With all this in mind, Dewey made ready to seize upon the far-away and unprotected islands of the Orient, — drilling his men and ships for their opportunity; and when the hour struck,

he took them into battle. It was in no part an accident, but a decisive action based upon his power of perception when he called upon Senator Proctor.

EVERYDAY OPPORTUNITIES

The lack of opportunity is ever the excuse of the weak and hesitant mind. Is not every one's life full of opportunities? Is not every lesson in school an opportunity, every examination another chance in life to grow, to improve? Every patient is an opportunity, every client is an opportunity, every sermon is an opportunity, every issue of the newspaper is an opportunity, every business transaction is an opportunity, — an opportunity to be polite, to display character, to be honest, to make friends. Every example you set for others is a great opportunity. Every responsibility thrust upon you, testing your strength and your honor is priceless. A spirited existence is the privilege of effort, and when that privilege is met like a man, opportunities to succeed along the line of your interest will come at you faster than you can use them.

What is there that is more often neglected than opportunity? How many daily opportunities are lost, never even recognized? It is not only your responsibility to take your opportunities, but also to make opportunities, for yourself and others.

A curious story came to my attention, which illustrates in a small way the principle of making an opportunity. Mr. Charles T. Yerkes, who became one of the millionaires of a Western city, began his career by taking advantage of an opportunity which came to him as he was passing an auction shop. He saw several

boxes of a kind of soap which his mother was accustomed to buying from the family grocer. He ran to the store and he asked the price the storeowner paid for the soap. "Twelve cents a pound," was the reply. On being further pressed for a lower figure, the shopkeeper remarked in a bantering tone that he would take all the boy could bring to his shop at nine cents a pound. Yerkes hurried back to the auction and bought the soap at six cents a pound. In this way he made his first money in trade.

Here is another story of a college student who stayed awake one night wondering if he must abandon his education due to a lack of funds. He was suddenly startled by a cry of "Fire." It was a seaport town, and upon rushing outside, he found a ship on fire. He met the owner and asked: "Are you going to try to save anything?" "No; if there is anything left tomorrow morning, I may try to get it, but there won't be."

"Will you sell her to me, just as she lies, for forty dollars?"

"Yes, indeed."

Then turning to the captain he said, "If you will go with my classmate here, he will give you forty dollars at once. I cannot spare the time, because I have got to get right to work on the vessel."

He engaged a few students and other men, extinguished the flames, and within a few days sold the wreckage for five hundred dollars. He recognized at a glance the possibilities of the situation; the captain on the other hand, could not see how to save anything.

Is it not possible that you have an opportunity at your own door? Upon learning that trout commanded a dollar a pound at the summer hotels, a New Hampshire man, living near by, purchased a few books upon fish habitat, and then stocked the waters that ran through his mountain farm; and he earned within a few short years much more from his fishing streams than he had ever been able to secure from his rocky lands.

A bright American woman who had a piece of swamp land was asked what she could do with it. "That land is only fit for frogs to live on" she was told. "Why, frogs shall live upon it then; I will raise frogs, and send them to the markets." And this she did so successfully that she bought all the adjoining swamps and enlarged her frog farm; and she began sending large supplies of this peculiar produce to the markets that have a demand for it.

A Yankee convalescent, slowly recovering from a long illness, was engaged in whittling a piece of soft pine one day, and he made from it, a toy for his little boy. He did his work so well that all the boys in the neighborhood begged him to make toys for them, and he soon found himself in the business of selling homemade toys throughout the school district where he lived. Subsequently, as his health recovered, he grew a very extensive toy business, his goods selling far and wide.

A young woman, Miss Maxwell, of Kansas City, started a boot-blacking enterprise, hopeful that she might make a living. She employed the bootblacks, and positioned them at suitable points throughout the city. Very soon she found herself earning five or six times as much net as she could have done by teaching

school. When she secured a surplus above what she needed for her ordinary expenses, the extra money she received was devoted to the relief of the unfortunate; and she systematically assisted the boot-blacks and street Arabs, who became her fast friends. Several hours a day she devoted to the supervision of her business, and her popular manners and winning ways secured for her a loyal customer base. Her charitable work was of great service to the poorest of the poor in her own city; and her example proved widely useful throughout her community.

AT YOUR OWN DOOR

Are not the opportunities of life at your own door? A man from Maine was called in from his hay field to wash clothes for his invalid wife. He had never realized before what washing entailed. Finding the method slow and laborious, he invented a washing machine and made a fortune. An observing barber in New Jersey invented clippers, and became rich.

It is the small, inexpensive invention, for which there is a great demand, which can be extremely profitable for the one with a watchful eye. The inventor of a patent for fastening kid gloves made several hundred thousand dollars out of it.

The inventor of the collar clasp earned a handsome income from yearly royalties. A sleeve button appliance made its maker very wealthy. A woman twisted a hair-pin to make it stay more securely, and her husband observed it. He soon began manufacturing crinkled hair-pins, and made his fortune out of it.

It is useless for you to say, "I cannot do this." You can at least keep your eyes open and cultivate your powers of perception, and see what you might do.

CHAPTER IV

Seizing the Forelock

SPANISH GOLD

When William Phips, a young shepherd boy from Maine, who had learned the ship carpenter's trade, was one day walking the streets in Boston, he overheard some sailors talking about a Spanish ship that had been wrecked off the Bahama Islands, which was supposed to have a great amount of money on board. He became determined to find it. He set out at once, and after many hardships, he eventually discovered the lost treasure.

What the sailors talked about, only he did. He took the initiative. In the story of the ancient statue you will remember what was said in regard to seizing opportunity by the forelock. If there are only a few who have the gift of vision, who can see what is a good thing, where others see nothing, there are perhaps still fewer persons who know how to seize upon an opportunity when they see it, very few who have the instinct for taking the initiative, which makes the difference between success and failure in any enterprise.

When Alexander the Great consulted the Pythian priestess, she refused to go to the temple, because it was not a promising day. He compelled her to go. "My son," she said, "thou art invincible." This was vision enough for him; he was indeed invincible.

"What," asks George Eliot, "is opportunity to a man who cannot use it?"

The point which I would now illustrate is this: that the most successful men have been those who actually improved what opportunities they saw.

An illustration of this is the experience of Mr. James F. Ryder, a photographer from Cleveland, Ohio. He happened one day to read in a German paper of a new process practiced by the artists of Bohemia, — by which they touched up a negative with fine instruments, thus removing any imperfections. Reading this, he immediately sent to Bohemia for an artist, and at length succeeded in bringing the art of Bohemia into his own service. He seized his opportunity by the forelock, and secured the best aid possible in his business, and then he brought to bear the forces of an energetic mind to advertise and expand his business. In a photographic exhibition in Boston, Mr. Ryder took the prize for the best work in America.

Another illustration of the point is the story of the wood turner, Thomas Cook, who walked one day fifteen miles over an English road to Leicester. He went there to attend a temperance convention. During his long walk the idea flashed upon him that a railroad company might be easily persuaded to run a special train to accommodate those who wished to attend conventions. The result was that he organized the excursion train business; and the name of Thomas Cook & Son became known all over the civilized world as the outcome of that lonely walk of fifteen English miles. Some other man perhaps might have thought of the

same thing, but Thomas Cook was the man to actually carry out the idea.

In the earliest days of cotton spinning, the small fibers would stick to the bobbins and make it necessary to stop and clean the machinery. This loss of time reduced the earnings of the operation. The father of Robert Peel noticed that one of his spinners always drew full pay, as his machine never stopped.

"How is this, Dick?" asked Mr. Peel, one day; "my father tells me your bobbins are always clean."

"Ay, that they be," replied Dick Ferguson.

"How do you manage it, Dick?"

"Why, you see, Meester Peel," said the workman, "it is sort o' secret! If I tow'd ye, yo'd be as wise as I am."

"That's so," said Mr. Peel, smiling; "but I'd give you something to know. Could you make all these looms work as smoothly as yours?"

"Ivery one of 'em, meester Peel," replied Dick.

"Well, what shall I give you for your secret?" asked Mr. Peel, and Dick replied:

"Gi' me a quart of ale every day I 'm in the mills, and I 'll tell thee all about it."

"Agreed," said Mr. Peel; and Dick whispered very cautiously in his ear, "Chalk your bobbins!" That was the whole secret, and Mr. Peel soon shot ahead of all his competitors, for he made machines that would chalk their own bobbins. Dick was handsomely rewarded with money instead of beer. His little idea saved the

world millions of dollars. Yet the world would never have known it but for one man's perceptive and executive qualities.

To cite another instance: Mrs. A. C. Condone, from Maine, manufactured more than 12,000 dozen mittens. "I began business," she said, "in 1864, in a little room about fifteen by twenty, with only forty dollars of capital. I lived in the country where there was little work, and many women's hands were ready to knit. During the first year I did not use twenty-five pounds of yarn. Yet I ultimately secured 1,500 people in farm towns to do my knitting. In 1882 I began to buy machines, and the work I used to do at a cost of twenty-five cents a pair is now done at six." The difference between Mrs. Condone and her neighbors was this: she had it in her to actually do what others merely thought about doing.

It is always so with successful people. John Knight, of Guatemala City, was a slave in Alabama in 1860. After gaining his freedom, he became a laborer for a firm that handled Central American fruits, and this led him to think of the possibility of becoming a fruit grower. This idea he carried out, while others who worked with him perhaps never thought it a possibility. He secured from the government of Guatemala 50,000 acres of land and then arranged with the New Orleans fruit dealers to buy $2,000,000 worth of Guatemala fruits each year. Later he became a coffee grower and a dealer in mahogany logs, and he soon became one of the richest and most powerful men in Central America. His leadership ability evenly matched his power of perception, and eye for opportunity.

A BASHFUL BOY

When Ichabod Washburn was the apprentice to a blacksmith in Worcester, Mass., he was a particularly bashful boy; yet when he found that no good wire was made in the U.S., and that one house in England had the monopoly of making steel wire for pianos, he quietly determined that he would make the best wire in the world, and that he would then contrive ways and means to manufacture it in enormous quantities. The bashful boy had his eyes wide open. He saw a great opportunity, and unlike many with a good idea, he actually went on and did something with it. His wire became the standard everywhere. His business finally increased to such an extent that he made twelve tons of iron into wire every day, employing the services of seven hundred men. And the great fortune he acquired he largely gave away to various charities, in an effort to make the world a better place.

Everybody knows the success of Edison the inventor. He spent his entire life watching for opportunities, and in making the most of them by carrying out his ideas. His powers of perception were well balanced alongside his proactive nature.

An authority on manufacturing once told us that many of the great plants of Europe were hampered by an unreadiness to make the most of their opportunities; while in America, if a man had a good thing, he would work it for all it is worth and fill the world with his goods.

When I alluded in a previous chapter to the importance of certain correct habits for doing business, which young people ought to acquire in preparing themselves for the opportunities of

life, I said that these qualifications were not in themselves enough; that a person might be accurate, and thorough, and industrious, and have many other useful traits of character, and that still this was not enough. What is enough, from a business point of view, is perception, by which one is quick to discern the opportunities which are open to him, whether at his own door or at the end of the world; and then, besides this

THE EXECUTIVE QUALITY

is needed. If you were to go into any one of the great cities of this country and inquire who those persons are who are doing the business which most supports the growth of great communities, you would find that it is the man who sees and the same man who carries out the idea he sees, — it is he who is the successful man. Whatever may be said of developing self-discipline and mental qualities, the capacity to see and the capacity to do are paramount. The men who have it in them to do the world's work are as a rule men of great natural capacity. Yet there is a difference between men, not all are alike and not all have what it takes to win on a large scale, men differ as to the things they can do or wish to do.

Mr. Charles Gould was a bright business man, but not wealthy. One day he bought a patent for a car coupler from a man who offered it to him for five hundred dollars. The man stipulated that he as the inventor should become a foreman of Mr. Gould's factory if he should put the goods upon the market. Mr. Gould knew that the Patent Office at Washington had given patents upon seventy-five different styles of car couplers, yet he

had a clear vision of the difference between the one which was now brought to him and anything else that had ever been put out in the open market, and he knew that this was a good thing. Besides this knowledge, Mr. Gould also possessed the executive quality by which, if he had a good thing, he could make the most of it. He paid the money to the inventor, and gave him a written promise that he would receive a foreman position in the event of there being a factory. Soon after, thirty-six hundred men were making these couplers.

GOVERNOR CORNELL

A somewhat similar story might be told of Governor Cornell, of New York, and his astounding success in the organization of the American District Messenger service; a business in which he cleared nearly half a million dollars, and which has earned vast sums of money for those who have had control of this service. He had purchased this invention from a relatively poor man for the sum of two thousand dollars. If Mr. Cornell had ignored the matter, as several others had done, the chances are that the discouraged inventor would have given up the attempt to interest people in his scheme. Others did not see it, as we say; others did not act upon it in a decisive way — throwing into it a vast amount of business ability — as Mr. Cornell did.

Perception and action; a quick eye, and clear vision; a vigorous right arm, and a skillful hand—these are the masters of success in any, and in every pursuit.

CHAPTER V

Fit and Misfit Opportunities

Was it not Sidney Smith who first mentioned that a round person sometimes gets into a square hole, and a square person is sometimes squeezed into a round hole; and that triangular persons and oblong holes, and oblong persons and triangular holes simply do not go well together?

What he meant was that if John Jacob Astor's father had succeeded in making his son his own successor as a butcher he would have quite ruined John Jacob's career as the great fur merchant and founder of a wealthy house. Parents must be very cautious in drawing children away from pursuits for which nature has designed them? The father of Sir Joshua Reynolds did not sympathize with his son's early artistic desires. The father of Turner, the painter, was anxious that he should become a barber. If the father and mother of Galileo had followed out their own wishes their son's scientific discoveries would have been made outside of their family.

Wonderful are the misfits of the world. "I do not forbid you to preach," said a bishop to a young clergyman, "but I fear nature does." "Most people today," said Phillips Brooks, "have no aversion to the sort of preaching you display; but still they may not listen to your kind of preaching, which is their right."

To succeed in any vocation, a man's purpose must be in harmony with his powers. A man out of place is only half a man, his very nature being diminished.

> "Brutes find out where their talents lie;
> A bear will not attempt to fly,
> A foundered horse will oft debate
> Before he tries a five-barred gate.
> A dog by instinct turns aside
> Who sees the ditch too deep and wide.
> But man we find the only creature
> Who, led by folly, combats nature;
> Who, when she loudly cries, ' Forbear!'
> With obstinacy fixes there;
> And, where his genius least inclines,
> Absurdly bends his whole designs."
> — Swift

It is not a necessarily wise thing for a man to follow the profession or the calling of his father and grandfather, although this is the method, generation after generation, for hundreds of years, in many communities. Your uncle's or brother's business is for them, and it may not be wise for you to undertake. Do not choose any pursuit because someone else has made a fortune in it. Do not choose it because it is the proper thing. Do not choose it because it is quick to study. Do not choose it because you think it is easy. "Work along the line of your strength and not of your weakness. Work toward your ambition, your one true aspiration.

YOUR CALL

Your talent is your call. Your legitimate destiny speaks in your character. "No man," says Bulwer, "struggles perpetually and victoriously against his own character. One of the first principles of success in life is to focus our career, all our physical and mental powers, and to use our natural abilities to do good in the area that we feel most at home." "No man is born into the world whose work is not born with him," says Lowell; "there is always work, and there are tools to work with, for all who will."

When Ole Bull was a student at Christiania University, he was asked to play upon his violin for the opening of a charitable institution. After some hesitation he agreed. The spell was upon him, firing every drop of his blood; and nearly the whole night he played in preparation for the event. The next morning he failed in his Latin examination, and in his despair and perplexity he opened his heart to his teacher. "This is the very best thing which could have happened to you," said his 'wise mentor. "Do you believe yourself fitted for a salaried position? Certainly not. It is the opinion of your friends that you should travel abroad and study music. Meanwhile you are appointed, for the time being, the Musical Director of the Philharmonic and Dramatic Societies."

The grand career of Ole Bull was an illustration of that saying of Emerson, "The high prize of life, the crowning fortune of a man, is to be born with an inclination for that which finds him in employment and happiness."

As a rule, what one enjoys most, tends to be his forte. No man can be ideally successful, or of great value to the world, until he finds his place. Without purpose and passion, he is like a locomotive, while perhaps he is strong on the track, he remains weak in any other place. "Like a boat on a river," says Emerson, "every boy runs against obstructions on every side but one. On that side all obstructions are taken away, and he sweeps serenely over a deepening channel into an infinite sea."

WHAT IS MY RIGHT PLACE? HOW SHALL I FIND IT?

However difficult it may be to answer such a question, it must be answered, or life is certain to be a failure. "Let every one," says Franklin, "ascertain his special business and calling, and then stick to it if he would be successful." Perhaps one's call may come to him by some happy accident. Erskine, the great English advocate, spent four years in the navy, in early life; and then, in the hope of more rapid promotion, he joined the army. Here he served more than two years, without once suspecting; that some other destiny was in store for him. Yet one fortunate day he attended a court, out of curiosity, in the town where his regiment was quartered. The presiding judge, an acquaintance, invited Erskine to sit near him, and he said to the youth that the pleaders at the bar that morning were among the most eminent lawyers of Great Britain. No sooner did Erskine hear what they said than he became determined to pursue their vocation. In an instant he decided to study law; it was in him, he believed, to excel them all, and he became one of the greatest forensic orators of the nation.

One of our most eminent American scientists who managed the observatory of a great university, began to study astronomy when he was working in a photographer's gallery at Nashville. He was led to it by picking up a book which had been brought into the studio and left there by accident. The book was so fascinating to the young man who found it that he sat up all night studying the volume, and then and there he made up his mind that he would learn all he possibly could about the wonders of the starry heavens. He bought a small spyglass, and spent many hours at night on the roof, studying with ever-increasing delight the celestial beauties opened to his astonished eyes. Out of his small earnings he purchased the tube of a large spyglass, into which he fitted the eye-piece, and he sent to Philadelphia for an object glass.

With this larger glass he made a discovery which at once brought him to the notice of the great astronomers of the day. Since that time the name of Prof. E. E. Barnard has been known among men of science throughout the world.

Was it not a happy accident that M. Louis Pasteur was the usher in a public building in Paris, where he made the acquaintance of a certain student who allowed him to look through his microscope? He was in the instant made almost wild with enthusiasm at the new world which the instrument revealed. And he did not rest until he made himself a master of the instrument, and through it made the most wonderful discoveries.

One of the leading entomologists of the world began life as a singularly dull boy. His teacher could not impart to him the simplest elementary knowledge. But one day, as she observed him looking steadily at something upon his desk, she discovered that he was observing the habits of a fly. The next time that this boy was called upon to recite, she said to her class: "You have all seen thousands of flies. Now I want each of you to tell me his impressions of a fly." This "dull" boy not only told the class about flies, but went on to tell them about different kinds of bugs. From that day his teacher encouraged his aptitude; and the boy was finally sent to Europe to forward his studies, and he became, at Leipsic, Moderator of the National Conservatory of Science; he was afterwards connected with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, and he later engaged in professional work in one of the great capitals of Europe.

How wisely that a district school teacher taught this boy what his right place was, and how wisely she aided him to find it. The father of Millet, the great painter of France, very judiciously said to his son, "Draw what you like; choose what you please; follow your fancy." This peasant boy Millet gathered his first inspiration for painting from the pictures in the old family Bible. His career as an artist was begun by painting sideboards; it culminated in the sale of the Angelus for more than 600,000 francs.

I NEVER ASKED ANYTHING ABOUT IT

"Sir, I would like to compose something today; how shall I begin?" asked a youth of twelve, who had played with great skill on the piano. "Pooh, pooh," replied Mozart, "you must wait."

"But you began when you were younger than I am," said the boy. "Yes, so I did," said the great composer, "but I never asked anything about it. When one has the spirit of a composer, he writes because he can't help it."

Mozart was indeed a composer when he was six years old. And when he was thirteen he became a member of the Philharmonic Academy.

Yet when the son of Mozart was asked whether he took pleasure in music, he replied by jingling a handful of gold, saying, "This is the music I like." He was a banker, not a musician. One must follow his passion and not the vocation of his father or of his grandfather, unless the two are the same.

How it shortens the road to success to early on make a wise choice of one's occupation, to be started on the road of a proper career while young, full of hope, while the spirits are high and enthusiasm is vigorous; to feel that every step we take, that every day's work we do, that every blow we strike helps to broaden, deepen, and enrich life.

The more eminent business men have not only had the power to perceive the possible opportunities of life which were open to them, as well as the power to select interesting work and to seize upon its opportunity, but they have also possessed a certain power of adaptation by which it has been possible for them to act according to all sorts of circumstances. This power to adapt, to be versatile to any situation in order to master it, can be illustrated at great length by citing the careers of many successful men.

George M. Pullman began his life work at a salary of forty dollars a year as a store clerk. This and his room was all that he received for three years. When this was given up, he was doing joiner work. Then he sought employment as a mover of buildings. Working at this, he was finally employed by the State of New York to remove several large warehouses along the line of the Erie Canal; and when this work was completed he went to Chicago, and there engaged in the same business. The entire city was to be raised eight feet in order to introduce a sewer system. Pullman did his work so well that he had endless projects to complete. It was while working on the Chicago buildings that he made plans for improving the rude sleeping cars that had recently been introduced on the Chicago and Alton Railway. He could foresee the future of bed-rooms on wheels. He began by building a most luxurious car, costing more than four times as much as any previously made. And henceforth he gave the main energies of his life to making the "Pullman cars." Yet even late in his career, whenever he saw a new opportunity, he would immediately write down his ideas and think on it until he could come up with a plan that would substantially improve the present condition. When he was ready, he would lay down the capital required and establish himself in yet another productive business venture. He made sure not to invest so much time as to impair the production of his principal business.

C. P. Huntington, the great railway man, was the son of a Connecticut farmer. He abandoned the opportunities of the farm, and peddled clocks in the mining districts of California. He

opened a hardware store. He united with Stanford in the construction of a railroad. With him one thing always led to another.

The same thing might be said of other great capitalists of America — Astor, Armour, Vanderbilt, Rockefeller.

In settling the questions, What is my place in life? and How shall I find it?—in deciding upon Fit and Unfit occupations, — it is not only necessary to have a certain preparation by which one may succeed in any business, but it is of equal importance to have Perception, an Executive Quality and the Power of Adaptation.

CHAPTER VI

All There

"Wherever thou art," said Goethe, "be all there." It is a great secret to do a thing but once; to concentrate your whole being upon the thing at hand, without anticipating it, and without worrying over it afterwards.

FOCUS YOUR ENERGIES

"One great cause of the failure of young men in business," says Carnegie, "is the lack of concentration." Has not every man who has become great, every man who has succeeded, confined his powers to one particular channel? It is not a matter of doing many things indifferently, but of doing one thing supremely, which is the demand of the hour. He who scatters his efforts in this intensely competitive and concentrated age cannot hope to succeed. Mental shiftlessness is the cause of too many failures; the wavering aim, the faltering purpose, has no place in a successful life. Misdirected labor is a waste of activity and energy. Men and women may be busy, yet never advance in the pursuit of their passion. "It puffed like a locomotive," said a small boy of his toy engine, "it whistled like the steam-cars; but it did not go anywhere."

AIM AT THE COW

"Look here," said the farmer to his new hand, "that kind of thing will not do. The corn will be dizzy that grows in a furrow so crooked as that. Fix your eye on something across the field, and head for it. That cow there by the gate is right opposite us. Put in your plough and aim at her, and you will make a straight row." "All right, sir.", said the young man.

Ten minutes later, when the farmer returned, he saw that the plough had been wandering in a zigzag course all over the field.

"Hold on! hold on, there!"

"Yes, sir," said Patrick, "I did just what you told me; I ran a straight line to reach the cow, but she would not keep still."

The wandering aim, the running over here and then over there whenever pulled; a purposeless, thoughtless, and unintelligent management of life's work, — what is all this for but to invite failure?

The great difference between those who succeed and those who fail does not consist in the amount of work done by each, but in the amount of intelligent work that is accomplished. The man with a single purpose, who concentrates his powers upon one unwavering aim, accomplishes more than the man of multiple interests who scatters his energies, and never knows what to do next. Nothing can take the place of an all-absorbing purpose. Education will not, genius will not, talent will not, industry will not, willpower will not. The life without a purpose is destined for failure.

HOW THE CUNARDERS DO

While it is true, as the great storytellers explain, that the good fortune of the wave may bring to shore a boat that is not steered. A man would be foolish to assume as much of himself. He who vacillates throughout his life, — first this way, then that, is pretty sure to sink, like an unmanned ship, before he even half finishes the voyage of his life. If we go into a factory where the mariner's compass is made we can see that the needles, before they are magnetized will lay in any direction. But once they have been energized by the magnet and received its magnetic force, from that moment on they point to the north, and are true to the North Star ever after. No man ever points steadily in any direction until he has been polarized, energized, by a choice, a passion for his ideal career. Working without a plan is as foolish as going to sea without a compass.

A steam ship which has broken its rudder may keep plodding along at full speed, but it will never reach harbor unless by accident. The Cunarders would steer straight toward a destined port when the ocean was smooth, when the currents and winds kick up, and they even keep to their course in the harshness of fog. They plough straight through the seas with only one thing in view,— their destined port; and no matter what the weather is, or what obstacles they may encounter, their arrival in port can be predicted within a few hours. A ship that is destined for Boston will not turn up in New York.

Young people can devote themselves to one overmastering purpose with a solid investment of their attention and effort,

which will make them forget for the time being that any other career could possibly be desirable. Those who make the great failures in life are the purposeless, the indifferent, the shiftless, the halfhearted. There is no trend, or evidence of a clear aim running through their work, unifying their efforts, and giving direction and meaning to their lives. A man with an all-absorbing purpose receives our admiration; there is a moral reward in everything he does, because there is an aim in it, a directness, a meaning that is contagious — imparting itself to all who come in contact with him.

This was the advice which was given by President Hayes to Major William McKinley, when a member of Congress from Ohio: "To achieve success and fame you must pursue a special line," said the President to the Congressman; "you must not make a speech on every motion offered or bill introduced. You must confine yourself to one particular thing. Become a specialist. Take up some branch of legislation, and make that your study. Why not take up the subject of the tariff? Being a subject that will not be settled for years to come, it offers a great field for study."

With these words ringing in his ears the Ohio Congressman began studying the tariff, and he soon became one of the foremost authorities on the subject. And when his tariff bill was passed by the House it was the supreme moment of his Congressional career.

The man who gives himself wholly to an idea is certain to accomplish something, and if he has ability and common sense, his success will be great.

While it is true, as I have said, that the power of adaptation is most essential in the conduct of life, it is also true that whatever you are engaged in you are required, in the words of Goethe, to be "all there." You are to think for it, plan for it, work for it, live for it, — throw your mind, might, strength, heart, and soul into it, and success will crown you the victor. The successful men and women of today are those with one overmastering idea, who possess one single and intense purpose.

To illustrate the point, look at the career of Johns Hopkins. He declared that he had a mission from God to increase his store, and that the golden flood that poured into his coffers did not belong to the hundreds of men who sought to borrow or beg it from him. They called him an old miser, mean and stingy. But it was all the same to him. He had during many years the grand purpose to gather many millions; and what he had gathered, he freely bestowed, — four million dollars for a hospital, three millions for a great university, and ultimately two million dollars more for these institutions. This was all in accord with the magnificent purpose which he planned early in his business career.

THE INSPIRATION OF A GREAT PURPOSE

> I hear a voice you cannot hear,
> Which says I must not stay;
> I see a hand you cannot see,
> Which beckons me away.
> — Tickell

When George F. Shrady, the celebrated physician, was nineteen years of age, he told his rich father that he wanted to go out and earn some money during vacation. The old gentleman attempted to dissuade him. One day the young man went into Douglas's mercantile agency, — the predecessors of R. G. Dun, — and said to Mr. Douglas, "I want some work."

"We have nothing we can give you," replied Mr. Douglas. "Yes, you have," remarked young Shrady, in an injured tone. He was then a sketch artist, and, with a few pen strokes, he produced a beautiful swan, and showed it to Mr. Douglas, who asked, with astonishment, "Did you do that?" "Yes." "Well, we can give you five dollars per week, with twenty-five cents per hour for all overtime hours. You can start tomorrow." "I'll take it," said young Shrady. "Come tomorrow? What is the objection to starting now?" the young man said. "All right. Manager," said Douglas, "get this boy a desk."

Mr. Douglas soon found that young Shrady could write shorthand at the rate of one hundred and sixty words per minute. He tested him one day by reading a newspaper article to him. Then he offered him a place as his private secretary. The young man refused it, and said he meant to make a doctor of himself. "Your head is built for business, and you could never make a doctor of

yourself," Mr. Douglas remarked, in a very discouraging tone. Some twenty years later Mr. Douglas went to Dr. Shrady's office for treatment. In the words of Munger, "There is no road to success, but through a resolute and definite purpose. A purpose underlies one's character, culture and position."

PAYING THE RIGHT PRICE

If you are "all there" in any business, you will make the most of it by paying the right price for it. This price is faithful, diligent, intelligent effort. What is life without a struggle?

"Yes, I know he needs the work," said a merchant of a young man who had applied to him for a position; "he is honest and fairly well fitted for the job, but each day for weeks past, in coming home from my office, I have seen him standing on a street corner with a group of idlers. I do not desire to have a young man in my employment who advertises me by idly smoking on a street corner. He must be in a more respectable business in his spare hours."

When Henry J. Raymond was an associate editor with Horace Greeley on the "Tribune," he at first earned only eight dollars a week, yet he worked on an average of thirteen or fourteen hours a day. When Raymond became editor of the New York "Times," over twelve columns of his own material was printed in the first edition. Upon the death of Daniel Webster, Raymond wrote nearly fifteen columns upon the event, at one sitting, within twelve hours.

"To have any chance of success I must be more steady in my labors than other men," wrote Lord Campbell when he was a student; "I must be in my chambers when my companions are at the theater; I must study when they are asleep; I must do more than is required or expected of me in order to ensure my success."

"He who rises earlier than his competitors," said Mr. Field, "and who works more hours within the limits of healthful endurance, will carry off the prize."

"To be successful in this world," says Nikola Tesla, "one must perform the hardest kind of work. You must plug away night and day, and not stop when others tire. There is no royal road to wealth." Tesla demonstrated a life of continuous labor in his laboratory, where, after working all day, from eight in the morning till eight at night, he often had his dinner brought in, and then continued to work till eleven or twelve. On very rare occasions he attended some social event. His life was not singular in this respect; often this was the way successful men and women have been able carry out the main purpose for which they live.

"Oh, if I could thus put a dream on canvas," exclaimed an enthusiastic young artist, pointing to a most beautiful painting. "Dream on canvas!" growled his master; "it is the ten thousand touches with the brush which you must learn to put on canvas, that alone is what will make your dream."

THE WORLD AS A PRIZE

"This world," says Robertson, "is given as a prize for the men who work in earnest."

It is a prerequisite of success that you love your calling. The best work is done when you have a passion for it, and the satisfaction one gets from doing it well can never be accurately measured. A purity of enthusiasm is felt by the men and women who have been most successful in their special lines of work.

"Men are nothing," exclaimed Montaigne, "until they are excited." An overmastering enthusiasm must enter into every invention, every masterpiece of painting or sculpture, every great poem, and every essay or novel that holds the world breathless with admiration.

What creates the irresistible charm of our young people, if not their unlimited and overflowing enthusiasm? Youth sees no darkness ahead. It forgets that there is such a thing as failure; it believes mankind to be awaiting their personal arrival, and that all will swiftly follow their lead. "A man," says Emerson, "is whole, happy and fulfilled when he has put his heart into his work and done his level best; but all that says or does to the contrary shall give him no peace. No matter what your work is, let it be yours; if you are a merchant, a preacher, blacksmith or president, let what you do come from deep within your bones; form your life around your passion and you will open a door by which the fortunes of heaven and earth shall stream in to you."

CHAPTER VII

He Missed It at Last

He was ploughing in the field, and his ploughshare by an inch missed turning up a pot of gold.

"He just missed it" may be said of many a man as to the main outcome of his life. What is enthusiasm at its highest, but an unflinching devotion to that which is best in life?

Do we speak of opportunity? Is not the opportunity to be a whole man or woman the chief purpose of life? What is the greatest opportunity of life? How can one broaden, deepen, and expand the God-given faculties that are within, to round out one's whole being into symmetry, harmony, and beauty? Is not the highest opportunity of life the opportunity to serve others?

Whatever your trade, your profession, your calling, be sure that it is pure, useful, and honorable. Choose a business that has expansiveness in it; an occupation which will develop you, elevate you, which will give you a chance for self-improvement, which will make you more of a man or more of a woman. "Thy life," says Carlyle, "is all that thou hast to comfort thee."

Does not every man need inspiration, a purpose that is all his own, an interest that arouses his very soul, if he is to make the most of life's opportunity?

Every human being is put here to offer something unique to the world around him. He is made for great things, and he is endowed with powers that provide a lofty potential. Each of us has a special skill, talent or interest that if fully developed could change the world, or at least a small part of it, for the better. As one of God's children we are here to grow, learn, expand and develop, to contribute. We should willingly offer up our special talents to teach others to become their best selves. To rise in the world is not merely to make money. In God's eyes, our best effort to be all we can be, as he meant for us to be, will always be good enough.

Do you not feel an inner exhilaration to expand yourself, to do more, to be more? Do you feel you have a purpose, a desire to grow, an ambition, an enthusiasm for life, as if an angel within you were struggling to come out of your body and take you to your rightful, more noble place in the world? A magnificent opportunity awaits the world's young people of today for self-investment, self-growth and personal development.

Sightless and paralyzed is the man who can not see or act upon his Hour of Opportunity; to quickly respond to the golden opportunity that knocks at his door; that looks in at his window; that shoulders him as he passes along the street; that suggests to him new chances for a more useful life.

Morally damaged is he who would waste the many opportunities of the world, who does not rise to the call, who does not accept the privilege offered to him by the Almighty to bear some worthy part in uplifting our common humanity.

It is for each of us to seek out, welcome in, and enthusiastically embrace the opportunities that our Maker has sent; to do our utmost to be our best selves.

The End

PUT THIS VOLUME TO WORK

Keep Going

Marden's point is that opportunity favors the person who has prepared for it before it arrives. The companion workbook gives you the questions for each chapter, and these free resources help you get ready for the next chance that comes your way.

- **The Hour of Opportunity Companion Workbook** Questions and exercises for all seven chapters.
- **Growth Roadmap Template** Plan the skills you'll build before the next opportunity opens up.
- **Find Your Strengths** Step 5 of the 10 Steps series, on finding the work you're best suited for.

THE LEADERSHIP SERIES FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING

VOLUME ONE	Ambition
VOLUME TWO	Character
VOLUME THREE	**The Hour of Opportunity**
VOLUME FOUR	Diligence: Do It to a Finish
VOLUME FIVE	Persistence: An Iron Will

Each volume comes with the ebook, the audio edition and a companion workbook, free at **Leadership-Tools.com**.