

THE GOLDEN RULES OF ACQUIRING WEALTH

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Table Of Contents

THE GOLDEN RULES OF ACQUIRING WEALTH

DON'T MISTAKE YOUR VOCATION

RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

AVOID DEBT LIKE A PLAGUE

PERSEVERENCE IS REALLY ANOTHER WORD FOR SELF-RELIANCE

WHATEVER YOU DO, DO IT WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT

DEPEND UPON YOUR OWN PERSONAL EXERTIONS

USE THE BEST TOOLS

DON'T GET ABOVE YOUR BUSINESS

LEARN SOMETHING USEFUL

LET HOPE PREDOMINATE, BUT BE NOT TOO VISIONARY

DO NOT SCATTER YOUR POWERS

BE SYSTEMATIC

READ THE DAILY PAPERS

BEWARE OF "OUTSIDE OPERATIONS"

DON'T INDORSE WITHOUT SECURITY

ADVERTISE YOUR BUSINESS

BE POLITE AND KIND TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

BE CHARITABLE

DON'T BLAB

PRESERVE YOUR INTEGRITY

The Golden Rules of Acquiring Wealth

In the United States where there is more land than people, it is not at all difficult for persons in good health to make money. In this comparatively new field there are so many avenues of success open, so many vocations which are not crowded, that any person of either sex who is willing, at least for the time being, to engage in any respectable occupation that offers, may find lucrative employment.

Those who really desire to attain independence, have only to set their minds upon it, and adopt the proper means, as they do in regard to any other object which they wish to accomplish, and the thing is easily done. But however easy it may be found to make money, I have no doubt many of my hearers will agree it is the most difficult thing in the world to keep it. The road to wealth is, as Dr. Franklin truly says, "as plain as the road to the mill." It consists simply in expending less than we earn; that seems to be a very simple problem. Mr. Micawber, one of those happy creations of the genial Dickens, puts the case in a strong light when he says that to have annual income of twenty pounds per annum, and spend twenty pounds and sixpence, is to be the most miserable of men; whereas, to have an income of only twenty pounds, and spend but nineteen pounds and sixpence is to be the happiest of mortals. Many of my readers may say, "we understand this: this is economy, and we know economy is wealth; we know we can't eat our cake and keep it also." Yet perhaps more cases of failure arise from mistakes on this point than almost any other. The fact is, many people think they understand economy when they really do not.

True economy is misapprehended, and people go through life without properly comprehending what that principle is. One says, "I have an income of so much, and here is my neighbor who has the same; yet every year he gets something ahead and I fall short; why is it? I know all about economy." He thinks he does, but he does not. There are men who think that economy consists in saving cheese-parings and candle-ends, in cutting off two pence from the laundress' bill and doing all sorts of little, mean, dirty things. Economy is not meanness. The misfortune is, also, that this class of persons let their economy apply in only one direction. They fancy they are so wonderfully economical in saving a half-penny where they ought to spend two pence, that they think they can afford to squander in other directions.

Before kerosene oil was discovered or thought of, one might stop overnight at almost any farmer's house in the agricultural districts and get a very good supper, but after supper he might attempt to read in the sitting-room, and would find it impossible with the inefficient light of one candle. The hostess, seeing his dilemma, would say: "It is rather difficult to read here evenings; the proverb says 'you must have a ship at sea in order to be able to burn two candles at once; we never have an extra candle except on extra occasions.'" These extra occasions occur, perhaps, twice a year. In this way the good woman saves five, six, or ten dollars in that time: but the information which might be derived from having the extra light would, of course, far outweigh a ton of candles.