

MENTAL EFFICIENCY SERIES

PERSEVERANCE HOW TO DEVELOP IT

By H. BESSER

"Success attends him who determines to persevere."

MENTAL EFFICIENCY SERIES

PERSEVERANCE
HOW TO DEVELOP IT

By H. BESSER

TRANSLATED BY FRANCIS MEDHURST, D.LITT.

AUTHORIZED EDITION

"Success attends him who determines to persevere."



FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
NEW YORK LONDON

1916

COPYRIGHT, 1915, BY
FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
Printed in the United States of America.
All rights reserved

Reprinted By TheLostFiles.com

PREFACE

Of all the modern "Keys to Fortune" none more easily turns the tumblers of the lock of Life than Perseverance. This quality Plutarch described as all-powerful. Said he, Perseverance is the best friend and ally of those who use properly the opportunities that it presents, and the worst enemy of those who rush into action before it summons them."

With his motto "Success attends him who determines to persevere," the Author of this work describes true perseverance; points out the impediments to its attainment and the obstacles to be overcome. The Reader is warned against the dangers of that excessive enthusiasm which leads to precipitancy, and is urged, above all things, never to be precipitate, for precipitancy is the handmaiden of error and the companion of misfortune. Likewise, he is advised to eschew obstinacy as the companion of ignorance, self conceit, and false pride. Obstinacy is an indication of a weak judgment and a stubborn mind. The obstinate man is wanting in culture, for he lacks both delicacy and refinement of temper.

Edmund Burke described obstinacy as a great vice which was frequently the cause of great mischief, for it is allied to constancy, fortitude, fidelity, firmness, and magnanimity all commendable virtues, which if practiced to excess lead to obstinacy, the one passion that never recovers from failure. It is the pathway to that narrowness of mind which leads to self conceit.

Perseverance is the dogged determination that overcomes difficulties which appear insurmountable. "Victory," said the great Napoleon, "belongs to him who has the most perseverance." The spirit of indomitable perseverance crowns every worthy effort. Here is a simple but effective guide to this great power.

The Second Part of this work is devoted by the Author to teaching how to acquire that moral force which leads to the development of Perseverance. By practical exercises he points out the way to secure it; teaches the control of self through the influence of the will, and leads the diffident man to self-reliance and that perseverance which plucks success even from the spear-point. The battle-cry of all who would succeed must be "Perseverance," but this battle cry, like all others, is worthless without support.

By Perseverance Hannibal crossed the Alps in fifteen days, Julius Caesar in eleven, and Napoleon the Great in five. He that would attain success must support it with persistent effort full worthy of his aim; for, just as the Indian strikes fire as the reward of continuous endeavor, so can we achieve success by indomitable and unceasing exertion, and thus, on the forge of experience, model the Key that shall turn the lock of Life and open the doors to Fortune.

Every earnest Reader of the following pages may draw from them that strength of mind, clearness of thought, and force of character that awaken enthusiasm and inspire that confidence which the world at large readily grants to the persevering and successful man.

- The Publishers.

CONTENTS

Preface	1
---------	---

PART ONE

The Impediments to Perseverance

I. True Perseverance	4
II. The Dangers of Obstinacy	17
III. How to Avoid Excess of Enthusiasm	26
IV. Indecision the Inveterate Foe of Perseverance	33

PART TWO

Perseverance: Its Acquisition and Effect--Practical Exercises

I. How to Develop Perseverance	43
II. Practical Exercises for Acquiring Perseverance	54
III. Perseverance in Our Daily Lives	60
IV. Perseverance and the Choice of a Vocation	68
V. A Key to Fortune	74

PART ONE

**THE IMPEDIMENTS TO
PERSEVERANCE**

CHAPTER I

TRUE PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance is that faculty which gives us the power to accomplish a piece of work without allowing ourselves to be turned aside from our purpose either by the initial difficulties involved or by the obstacles that multiply themselves as we progress with our task.

It is that form of energy which enables us to develop sufficient strength of will never to be discouraged by the labor we have to face in accomplishing what we set out to do.

It is the art of marching directly forward toward the goal we have set before us, quite ignoring all temporary embarrassments, great or small, save by putting forth all our strength to surmount them.

It is the quality found in people of an enthusiastic temperament, who, once they have discerned the favorable possibilities of an enterprise, allow nothing to divert them and can never be defeated by the occurrences that tend to hinder its successful outcome.

The people who possess perseverance are of the type that is able to keep walking steadily in the path that has been chosen, despite the pitfalls encountered along the way.

Obstacles, far from lessening the courage of such people, seem rather to redouble it.

The fever of battle increases their strength tenfold and the difficulties they meet merely sharpen their wits.

The persevering know nothing of the weaknesses which serve to defeat those whose feeble wills go to pieces at the first encounter with opposing forces.

Such people abandon themselves to despair and cast all the blame upon fate, which has nothing to do with it.

They are very careful not to admit their own incompetence and make no attempt to change it into the energy that will accomplish results.

Their ineptitude is much better suited to inaction and they cease to struggle toward the goal while excusing themselves to their own consciences by exclaiming:

"Nothing succeeds with me! It is much wiser to persevere no longer!"

All the same they miss no opportunity of expatiating upon the luck of their neighbors who are able to carry all their undertakings to a successful issue.

"Oh! If that were I," they cry, "it wouldn't come out in that way! For them everything goes right!"

Their envy has led them to state a truth.

Practically speaking, everything succeeds for the man who has will-power and perseverance and nothing can ever come to a successful termination in the hands of the man who deliberately ignores his opportunities of making every favorable slant of fortune serve his purpose.

Never at any period in the world's history was perseverance more necessary than it is in our social conditions of the present day.

The spread of general education, in quickening so many talents that were formerly merely dormant in the germ, has enormously increased the number of competitors in the struggle.

The battle has become for this reason much more bitter and more long-drawn out, and demands of those who are engaged in it an inflexible will, backed up by untiring effort, which is the base of all perseverance.

This persistence of purpose does not merely bring into play the qualities needed to hasten the accomplishment of an end we have in view.

It is also the result of an idea that has been pondered over and cherished in the mind until such time as it has acquired sufficient vitality to be able to transform itself into deeds.

It will remain sterile if the goal is not clearly visioned. Before we are able to maintain our course with tenacity in one fixed path it is indispensable that we must know exactly where it leads.

The number of those who wander along blind alleys is legion. These people are filled with astonishment when they encounter difficulties that it was given to them to foresee, if they would. Those who are endowed with perseverance collect their forces at this stage; they reflect upon the nature of the obstacles they are likely to encounter and estimate their own forces of resistance.

If they feel themselves unable to make headway against the barriers before them; if they foresee that these difficulties will very surely soon become impossibilities, they will not hesitate a moment, but will go back to their starting-point and will look for a more radical route.

Nevertheless, for many people to abandon a project is to convince themselves of their own weakness, and they will shrink from a determination which appears to them in the light of a failure.

But for the man of energy the obstacles are the enemy, and, just as a soldier would think himself dishonored were he to fly in the face of a movement of the hostile forces, he will feel himself lowered in his own estimation if he does not keep up the struggle to the very end.

The first thing to be done by those who find themselves in this position of difficulty is to stop marching forward, not in order to retire, at first, but to give themselves time for reflection.

We shall see later on that it is vitally necessary never to do anything without consideration if one has made up one's mind to be persevering.

Reasoning should be the foundation of all our enterprises.

The man who engages in a fight without first having decided that such a step was necessary is beaten before he starts.

What soldier would think of going to war without his weapons?

In the struggle for life the battle is no less bitter than on the field of carnage and it is sometimes equally deadly.

When one is sufficiently informed upon the efforts that must be put forth, and when one has reflected in advance upon the windings and the difficulties of the road ahead, it will be time to take up the question of shortening the first and of surmounting the second.

The parent of all perseverance is the power of the motive idea.

This virtue has been much calumniated.

The weaklings and the incapable are glad to give it the name of "mania" or "fixed idea."

But fixity of ideas is an indispensable quality in the accomplishment of results.

Unsettled and wandering ideas invariably lead to decisions whose diversity is their weakness.

The man who really and ardently desires to arrive at his goal will mistrust every suggestion that is alien to the main purpose that fills his mind.

The ends he seeks will always be the regulators of the decisions he makes.

He will not lose sight of the fact that the effort of will-power that causes him to make a certain decision is for him merely a transitory state of mind.

In order that this state of mind may become definitely established it is necessary that it should produce acts which will tend toward the accomplishment of his purpose.

In those cases in which the action has been prematurely undertaken he must not allow himself to be haunted by any thoughts inimical to the successful outcome of what he has determined to do.

"We are now speaking only, it should be understood, of those cases in which such thoughts might turn him aside or lead him astray from his goal.

In all other cases every change of place, every possible betterment that he thinks of should be welcomed by him and critically examined with all possible care.

However, before changing his original purpose, it will be well for him to undertake a serious examination of the facts involved, in order to prevent himself from embarking thoughtlessly upon a dangerous course, or, what is a thousand times worse, arriving nowhere in particular.

The man who would possess the gift of perseverance should, before elaborating the plan which is to be perseveringly followed out, do exactly what all prudent travelers do at the time when they are about to set out upon a journey.

They begin by consulting their tastes, and the reasons or the special interests that lead them to choose one country rather than another.

The choice once made they consider their means.

Next they consider the question of the amount of time they are able to devote to the trip.

They then provide themselves with clothes and equipment of all sorts, of which they are likely to stand in need.

This done, they spread out before them the map of the country they propose to visit and carefully plan out their itinerary, allowing for the delays of the journey and the difficulty of making connections, and marking the towns at which they wish to stop and the spots or the localities which they think will be likely to interest them.

Then only do they actually start upon their journey, knowing exactly where they are going, without being exposed to any delay from the occurrence of conditions which will be likely to turn them aside from the route they have chosen.

Those who act otherwise will very likely be delayed in some manner at the very outset.

The danger of missing connections, which they have not worked out carefully, will keep them in a constant state of anxiety that will deprive them of all freedom to enjoy themselves. Failure to provide themselves with necessaries will cause them continual