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Frances E. Willard, n.d.)**

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FRANCES E. WILLARD



*“The
Major”——
of
A Multiplex Career*

THE great vision and practical methods which motivated the life of Frances E. Willard are embodied in the Declaration of Principles which she wrote for the newly organized Woman's Christian Temperance Union in 1874. Her seer-like glimpses into the future, where she saw habits and customs changed by the discoveries of science and the better understanding of human beings, has brought one of these principles to the consideration of the entire social order.

Few women have had such natural endowments for leadership. From a world educational tour of two years, she returned with a great urge to help solve some of the problems she had seen. There were three such, she thought—the woman question, the temperance question and the labor question. All these, to her mind, were fractions of the Human question.

"What shall I do with my life?" she asked herself. Too advanced then in her ideas for a return to her former field in school management, she said, "If my Mother Church had called me to her altars," . . . but that then could not be. There was not a single cry which could arise from the world, not one single wrong which could be redressed, that did not find echo in her heart, that did not call her to rise and go forth in chivalric strength and gentleness. She must by her very nature gather people to serve some great cause. "I will invest my life where it will bring greatest returns. I will invest it in humanity."

Her deep, spiritual experience and aspiration, her teaching ability, her sweet persuasiveness of oratory and personal magnetism to draw others to her plans,—all these qualified her for leadership in many fields.

GREAT EDUCATIONAL AGENCY

She possessed a rare faculty to recognize ability. This brought, to whatever project she had in hand at the moment, those best fitted to carry it on. Through the Woman's Christian Temperance Union she saw an opportunity to make the influence of women an appreciable power in the world, not only against the liquor traffic but against every ill that threatens the home and strikes at civilization. She saw in this movement a great educational agency to train women for service for "God and Home and Humanity" and an opportunity to write the "Golden rule of Christ into the customs of society and the laws of the land."

With such natural qualifications and such acquired development thereof, her urge for action led her into the large place God had prepared for her.

The "human question" is touched by the liquor question in every phase. Hence, when God's clock struck the hour for women to rise in defense of home and childhood and country against the liquor habit and the liquor traffic, He had a great leader ready. Hearing the call, she responded, "Here am I, send me."

"Everything is not in the temperance reform" she said, "but the temperance reform should be in everything." Therefore a "Do-Everything" policy was her plan. "Agitate, educate, organize" were the watchwords she chose for the new work. She soon added, "legislate." The methods were "Preventive, Evangelistic, Educational, Social, and Legal." The means to carry on were by way of departments, each under the direction of a specialist. Many of these creations of her fertile brain now have been discontinued for they have been worked out into the "customs of society and the laws of the land." Among those that early claimed department action were School Savings Banks, Free Kindergartens, Physical Culture, Mercy Service, Scientific and Economical Cookery, Pure Food, Securing Homes for Homeless Children. These with others, are now included in legal statutes or have other organizations promoting the specific project.

Frances Willard agitated and called for action also on the questions of housing, of slum clearance, workman's compensation, co-operation in capital and labor, social security and old age assistance, postal savings banks, ethical culture in the public schools to develop the "Head, Hand and Heart."

She said, "When we began the delicate, difficult, and dangerous operation of dissecting out the alcohol nerve from the body politic we did not realize the intricacy of the undertaking nor the distances that must be traversed by the scalpel of investigation and research. The beautiful brain that can think out an epic, compose a symphony, transfigure a canvas, invent an engine, a telephone, an airship—we are in the fight for its freedom and integrity,—the holiest fight this side of Jehovah's throne."

To bring such freedom fully to fruition, Miss Willard knew there must be political action. She therefore set herself to influence support through the political parties. The National WCTU Convention adopted her resolution:

"WE WILL LEND OUR INFLUENCE TO THAT PARTY BY WHATEVER NAME CALLED, WHICH SHALL FURNISH THE BEST EMBODIMENT OF PROHIBITION PRINCIPLES AND WILL SURELY PROTECT OUR HOMES:"

and the organization still continues to use this precept as a working basis for political action.

An eminent statesman summed up Frances Willard's unusual ability by saying "She was a woman called of God, a woman who preached Christ in politics, Christ in the home, equality of purity of men and women, the destruction of legalized wrong, the upbuilding of all that was great in home, in government and the nation." The religious devotion of her life was the secret of her greatness. Love was the motivation of her life.

She kept the faith. When Frances Willard dedicated her life to the cause of humanity through the work of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, those who saw only in the present felt that she had turned her back on success and fame. She realized the possible sacrifices. She could not have dreamed of the far-flung fame that was to come. Three times the Congress of the United States has paused to do her honor. Pages would be required to list the innumerable tributes paid her around the world.

It was on February 17, 1877, twenty-one years before, to the day—when as she passed to her Father's Home she whispered, "How beautiful it is to be with God" — that she had written in her Bible as her life motto the Biblical injunction: "*And whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.*" (Col. 3:17)

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"The happiest thing in life is doing good according to a plan."

F.E.W.

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