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### SHALL WOMEN STUDY LAW?

Having received numerous applications for advice from young ladies desirous of studying law, it has occurred to me that a few words to such, through the columns of the Woman's Journal, might be of sufficient general interest to compensate for the room it would occupy. If so, these brief suggestions are at their disposal.

First, I am asked: "Had I better study? Will it pay?" To this I reply, to all having a taste for such study and time to devote to it, by all means study. Should you never practice, or even never complete a full course of reading, your time could not have been improved to better advantage than by reading law. The information thus obtained will be invaluable to you and the mental discipline is worth solid gold. Sooner or later women will be voters, and when the bridegroom of freedom calls, may he find wise virgins with their lamps of knowledge trimmed and burning! If every woman in the country could give even six months to a course of legal reading, the objection that women need to be educated for the ballot would be brushed aside like a last year's cobweb. Dress more simply, let the novels and magazines go, and read law, if you fancy that you have even a faint glimmering of a taste for it. You will never regret the time thus spent.

Second, "What previous education is necessary?" The more the better. A collegiate course is desirable if you are young and can spare the time for it. But it is not indispensable. Latin is a great help; but neither is Latin indispensably necessary. A thorough mathematical course and a good knowledge of history are necessary. You should be well read in general literature and should have taken a metaphysical course and have studied some good logic. It is well to have studied languages. Of course the greater your educational acquirements, the more capital you have to start with.

Third, "Shall I commence with Blackstone, and is it better to go to a law school, study in an office, or read at home?" I know little or nothing of law schools, and so will not pronounce upon them; but will simply say that a good legal education may be obtained outside of them, however pleasant or profitable study in a class with others, and guided by a proficient teacher, might prove to be. Having laid a foundation in a good English education, the student should commence with Blackstone, and, unless very familiar with English history, should read some good history of England or of English law in connection with it. Blackstone should be very thoroughly and carefully studied and reviewed; and, the student should have by her side Burrill's or Bouvier's Law Dictionary, and should search out and learn the definition of every word and phrase she does not understand. It is better to pursue a course of reading at home, quietly and uninterruptedly, than to sit in an office where study is constantly broken in upon by other duties. The student's course should be directed by some good lawyer, to whom she can resort for advice and explanation when necessary; and, after a thorough course of reading is completed, she should serve an apprenticeship in a busy office, where she can learn all the details of practice, and should also sit through the trial of as many cases in court as practicable.

Warren, in his treatise on the study of law, lays it down as a rule that six hours a day is about the right proportion to devote to legal study. Closer application wearies too much for profit, and with a less amount of study the interest sometimes flags. This, experience has convinced me, was good advice.

The student should have Blackstone so well in hand that it will be before her mind's eye like a map, with every division and subdivision, and their contents, clearly outlined and correctly located. Kent comes next. That also should be thoroughly read, and before or in connection with it, a good United States history and the Federal Constitution should be carefully studied. For a further reading different attorneys would advise differently, and the study of pleading and practice would vary in the different States. The student could obtain lists from law schools, which would aid in selecting a judicious course of reading. I would suggest after Kent, Reeve's Domestic Relations, Aryel and Ames on Corporations, Parsons on Contracts, Parsons on Partnerships, Washburn's Real Property, Bishop's Criminal Law and Procedure, and Greenleaf on Evidence, as elementary works. Greenleaf cannot be too thoroughly studied, especially the first volume, which the student should make a part of herself. As has been already remarked, the pleading and practice vary in the different States, and the student would need to resort to a legal friend for advice as to text books. The Constitution and Statutes of her own State, or the one in which she proposed to practice, would come last on the list of preparatory reading. The statutes will bear superficial reading in places, while other portions should be very carefully read.

More might be added to the course I have suggested, but little could well be spared from it. After pursuing it, the student could make such further selections as her judgment dictated. After admission, the careful attorney will read such other works or portions of them as have a bearing on the legal points which come before her in the course of her practice.

Fourth, "Can a woman practice? Is it practicable?" To this I reply very decidedly, it is practicable. I mean, of course; in those States in which a woman is not precluded from entering the profession. In Illinois a law had to be passed to allow women to practice law, the courts not admitting her under the old statute. In Missouri and the District of Columbia, ladies have been admitted through the law schools. In Wisconsin, where the statute specifying the qualifications of attorneys does not mention sex, I was admitted a year ago, with no precedent, so far as I could ascertain, in my favor. For other States with a similar statute, this would be itself a precedent.

Once admitted, there is nothing but prejudice in the way of successful practice for a suitably qualified woman. But prejudice is rapidly melting away, and by the time those now contemplating a course of study are ready for practice, I have faith to believe that there will be comparatively little to contend with. A woman can certainly sit in an office and draft wills, deeds and mortgages, can prepare briefs and give advice. She can also go into court, examine and cross-examine witnesses, address juries, and win her cases against experienced attorneys, as experiment has demonstrated in more than one instance. The greatest obstacle is the hesitancy many feel about employing a woman. But practice will come. Women who have been defrauded by men whom they thought they could trust, or who have been brought to grief by unprincipled or incompetent lawyers, will seek refuge with an honest woman upon whose judgment and integrity they know they can rely. And, the ice once broken by a few carefully worked and successful cases, there is no further trouble in obtaining business.

Fifth, "Is the Court-room an improper place for women?" Legal gentlemen sometimes assure young women desiring to study, that it is so, and that "no woman could practice law and maintain the respect of members of the bar." This is wickedly and absurdly untrue. I have sat in court all day long, day after day and week after week, and have never seen or heard anything calculated to shock a woman of refinement, excepting the marvelous expectorations of tobacco juice, which I confess were somewhat of a surprise to me. I had no idea, before, of the wonderful capacity of the human system for generating saliva. But my professional brethren are improving in this respect, and I am sanguine enough to believe that I shall live to see the day when spittoons will no longer ornament the court-room. My attendance at court had no effect to lessen the respect of members of the bar for me, and I know that today I have the sincere respect of every one of them, and the hearty goodwill and fellowship of the ablest and best among them, some of whom have co-operated with me as associate counsel, and others, as opposing counsel, have shown themselves sensible and manly. Mrs. Foster of Iowa, can give similar testimony from her experience, and, I doubt not, can many others. So, girls, do not be afraid of this ghost which the enemy have gotten up to frighten you. There is nothing more dangerous than a broomstick behind the white sheet!

Sixth, "Is practice remunerative?"

This is the hardest question of all to answer. My experience has only been for a year, and is too limited to give reliable information. I can only say that it is not immediately remunerative, unless in very exceptional cases, either for men or women. It generally takes years to build up a good paying practice, and if the first few years pay expenses, the practitioner does well. For one needing immediate pecuniary aid, then, it is not best to enter the legal profession; but for one who can afford to sink a few years in hard, patient, plodding work, I believe a successful future is in store.

Such are a few among the many suggestions that occur to me, and they are more lengthy than I intended to make them. I trust the frequent references to my own experience will not be deemed egotistical, as personal experience is my principal source of information on these points. My experience at the bar has been so brief that I give advice with diffidence, feeling how imperfect it is and how much better an older practitioner could do it than I; but if what I have ascertained will be a help to others contemplating similar labors, I am very happy to serve them.

Lavinia Goodell, Atty. at Law. Janesville, Wis.