

HOW TO BUILD UP A BUSINESS.

A PRACTICAL TALK ON THE QUALITIES THAT TELL IN LIFE.

A YOUNG MAN'S FIRST START—THE HABIT OF THRIFT—STEADFASTNESS OF PURPOSE IS THE SECRET—HOW SUCCESSFUL MERCHANTS CARVED OUT THEIR CAREERS.

FORTY years ago I thought that the successful business man was the possessor of some mystic power that lifted him above the rank of other men. For many years I have been aware that there was no truth in my boyish fancy. The successful business man of to-day is the painstaking, earnest, forceful man who goes at his work with a will, who follows the little things, who masters the field in which he is laboring.

Once in a great while some one discovers a gold mine, and so becomes rich with a rush. Now and then a business man, with a long look ahead, gets such control of some phase of the market that he makes a fortune in a few months, or a few days. But the great mass of business men who attain success grow slowly, and so healthily. I have often thought that the growth of character in a man and the growth of ability in business are very much alike, and that both resemble the growth of coral under the sea.

When I advise a young man as to a business career I say to him, "What are your natural leanings? In what direction do you think you would prefer to grow?" Very few young men can tell me with any definiteness what lines they would choose. After the days when to be a circus man, or a street car driver, or a pugilist, is the height of his ambition, comes a time of great uncertainty. As a young man sees the world a little more clearly, he begins to realize that success may not come for the asking; that there must be effort to back intelligence, and that deciding upon a career is one of the most momentous events in his life.

I have never yet known a young man to start out in any worthy calling and follow it intelligently and earnestly without making a success out of it. Whether it is banking, or blacksmithing, or teaching, or trading, with health and energy and singleness of purpose, there is but one result. "Singleness of purpose" stands for a great deal. Look into the causes which lead to most of the business failures and you will find that outside speculation is at the bottom of the trouble.

SHIFTLESSNESS AND EXTRAVAGANCE.

As a boy on a north Pennsylvania farm, I was impressed with the almost invariable tendency to shiftlessness shown by farm hands. In those days they received perhaps twelve dollars a month and board. There really was no need for them to spend much beyond the small amount needed for clothes. Yet, of perhaps fifty of these men that I knew well in the course of half a dozen years, I recall but one who saved anything. Some of them would spend more than a twentieth of an entire year's earnings for a horse and buggy on a single holiday. They were sure to repeat the same extravagance at every opportunity. Many of these men I know now. As a rule they married women as shiftless as themselves, and have lived in a sort of hand-to-mouth way every since.

The one exception that I recall was rather the butt of his associates. Not over bright we thought him then, and I am sure now that he was not particularly brilliant, as brightness is apt to be measured. At first he could not command more than ten dollars a month—two dollars less than the standard. But he was a careful, uncomplaining workman, and while I was still intimate with him, he had saved \$500, which was working for him—bringing \$30 a year, for he was content with a certain per cent. rather than venture after an uncertain usurious rate. By this time he was regarded as a promising man. Farmers were glad to pay him more than

the ruling rates, because he was reliable and earnest, and took the same sensible interest in his employer's affairs that he always took in his own.

More than thirty years slipped by before I got into the old neighborhood again. Some of the men I had known there were dead, some had "gone west," most of them were the shiftless heads of shiftless families, and still working out, or farming on shares. The wealthiest man for miles around, the owner of most farms, and the recognized leader in general business affairs, was the one we had regarded as not over bright. Looking back at it all, I cannot see why every one of these farm hands had not at least an equal "opportunity" with the solitary one who succeeded.

HOW THE PUBLIC ARE ATTRACTED.

But this is not "building a business" in the full sense in which I propose to discuss it. The qualifications that make a farm hand a wealth-getter are important for the business builder in a broader field. But he must have more. The great success of a business comes from so conducting it that public support is assured. That can only be had by appealing to the self interest of the public.

Taking retail stores devoted to general merchandise for the illustration, it will be found that where equal goods can be had for the least money most people will go. If to this can be added better conveniences and more liberal treatment, the advantage increases.

Where any business has grown phenomenally, it will be found that somewhere in its management is a person with an exceptional force of character; some one who saw clearly where rivals groped or guessed. But it will also be found that his method of doing business is surprisingly simple, that the only "secrets" about it are a little more common sense in the appeal to the self-interest of his possible customers, and a little more solicitude for their comfort.

I can name, at least, four great and prosperous business houses in leading eastern cities whose pedigrees run straight back to push-carts and peddlers' outfits, and that, too, not so long ago.

A GREAT MERCHANT'S HUMBLE START.

John Wanamaker delivered his first order in a wheelbarrow. He had just started Oak Hall in Philadelphia. He and his father together had barely \$4,000 capital. There was rent to pay in advance. There were goods to buy—cash a little, credit a great deal. There was help to hire and fitting up to do. The \$4,000 was stretched to its utmost. When the first order came, everyone was on edge to fill it the best possible, and the head of the house put the big bundle in a barrow and wheeled it to the customer. More than that, the \$34 he received was taken to a printing office and all paid for an advertisement of the new firm.

In a country town of perhaps a thousand people, years ago, I knew a trader whose entire stock, at starting, did not exceed one hundred dollars in value. If any of the other dealers noticed him at all, it was only to laugh at him and make fun at his expense. But whatever he had to sell was good. If he agreed to furnish butter or apples to a customer there was never any question as to quality or quantity. The butter was fresh, the eggs were fresh, the apples were never "topped out." Anyone who had been served by him once was pretty sure to go again and advise others to go. In a year or so he was doing a very tidy business, and other merchants were very serious when they talked of the competition he gave them. Within four years he had the largest trade of any store in all that section. He simply did business better than his rivals were doing it, and self-interest turned the people to him.

Again, I say that the "genius" that builds a business is singleness of purpose, tireless industry, wise economy, and such a presentation as will appeal to the self interest of the public—if the business is one that depends upon free will popular support.—Manley M. Gillam, in Success.