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A TALK WITH JOHN WANAMAKER.

Philadelphia, Oct. 12, 1897.—I came from Washington to Philadelphia to have an interview with Mr. John Wanamaker. I wanted his ideas of advertising, business methods and of the condition of the times for the readers of this paper. I had no appointment with Mr. Wanamaker, but I knew him while he was postmaster general, and was sure that if I could get access to him he would talk. He is, however, a very busy man. He is, you know, the biggest merchant in the United States, if not in the world. Since he bought the establishment which was originally founded by A. T. Stewart in New York he has more than doubled his mercantile interests. His store here in Philadelphia handles tens of millions of dollars' worth of goods a year, and its profits foot up, I have been told, more than a million dollars every twelve months. He has four thousand clerks here under one roof, and his interests reach out to every country of Europe and in every part of the United States. He is one of the great advertisers of the world. I have heard it said that the man who writes his daily letter about new goods for the newspapers receives a salary of \$16,000 a year, and that he pays each of the Philadelphia papers from two to four thousand dollars a month for advertising. Mr. Wanamaker supervises almost the whole of his interests himself, and it goes without saying that he has plenty to do.

Men who do business of such proportions are usually hard to reach. They are besieged by cranks and beggars, and did they not guard their leisure they would have no time for work. Still, I saw Mr. Wanamaker. The journey I took in getting to see him was an interesting one. One of the clerks told me where the office was, directing me to a little corner room on the second floor. Here I found a white-haired old man and a brown-haired young boy. The old man must have been seventy; the young boy did not look to be more than seven. The old man made me think of a Methodist deacon. He was one of Mr. Wanamaker's confidential secretaries. He told me that he did not think I could see Mr. Wanamaker at all that afternoon, although he thought he was somewhere about the store. I urged my case, and the old gentleman finally said that he would present the matter to Mr. Jones. A moment later Mr. Jones came in. Mr. Jones is the second confidential secretary of Mr. Wanamaker. Like the first secretary, he is a man of mature years and of clerical aspect. His beard is as long as that of Aaron, and his face is as sober as that of Moses must have been when he first saw the golden calf. Mr. Jones decided that I might possibly be of interest to Mr. Wanamaker. He called the young boy and told him to take me to the anti-room of the office of the great merchant,

and to give my card to the lady in charge. The young boy went with me. It was almost a Sabbath day's journey from Mr. Wanamaker's public office to the little private den which forms his real work shop. We walked through rows of counters to the opposite corner of the building, took the elevator, and finally away up under the roof, next to a long hall filled with bookkeepers, I was shown into a little room, and my card was left with Mr. Wanamaker's private secretary. This private secretary was a young lady. She was a more attractive person than the confidential secretaries at the other end of the building. She was, in fact quite pretty, but exceedingly reticent. She told me that Mr. Wanamaker had just stepped out, but that in all probability he would soon step in. She asked me to wait. I waited. I waited an hour. Other people came in and waited too, but most of them soon got tired and left. I continued to wait until at last I heard a quick step go up the hall, and the door of the room beyond opened. The step was that of Mr. Wanamaker. Mr. Wanamaker at last was in. The question with me now was, was he in for me. The young lady took my card and left the room. A moment later she returned, and said that Mr. Wanamaker would see me. I entered the room, and a moment after that was chatting with one of the biggest merchants of the United States.

Mr. Wanamaker's private office is not more than ten by twelve in size. He does his work at a little \$25 desk, crowded up under the window, so that the light falls over his right shoulder, as he sits there looking over the figures of each day's business. He rose, and as we shook hands I could not see that he looked a day older than when he was postmaster general.

Still, he is now in his sixtieth year, and he has been an active business man for more than a generation. He has few wrinkles and does not look hurried or worried. As I shook hands with him I remarked upon his freshness, and said to him that he did not seem to be overworked. He replied: "No; I am not overworked. Still, I have plenty to do. I have to spend a part of each week in New York. I get reports from my New York store every morning, and the business of two establishments is, of course, greater than one."

"I suppose your business extends to the whole country, Mr. Wanamaker, does it not?"

"No," was the reply; "it is largely local. The business of any great store must be near home. My chief customers are within a radius of 100 miles of New York and Philadelphia. Of course, we sell some goods by mail; but the real business is made up of the goods which we sell across the counters."

"I should think, Mr. Wanamaker, that this store would have been large enough for one man. You have made a great success here. Why did you

add to your work by buying the establishment in New York?"

"Why do we do anything?" said the merchant. "It is hard to tell. I can only say I saw that there was an opening for such a store as I have in New York. I took it, not that I wanted to compete with the other merchants there, but that I might succeed in satisfying the demand which I thought existed. I was right. The store has done better than I expected."

"Mr. Wanamaker, you are one of the largest advertisers in the country. I have noticed that you keep your advertisements running during the hard times. Many of the merchants have let them drop. Does it pay to advertise when times are hard?"

"I certainly think so," replied Mr. Wanamaker. "When the times are hard and the people are not buying is the very time that advertising should be the heaviest. You want to get the people to see what you have to sell, and you must advertise to do that. When the times are good they will come of their own accord. But I believe in advertising all the time. We never stop advertising."

"You use the newspapers almost altogether for advertising, do you not?"

"Yes; I have tried all kinds, but I think newspaper advertising is by far the best. I used to spend a great deal of money in posters and bills, but I have given up that long ago."

"Can you see any immediate results from such advertising," I asked.

"I should think so," replied Mr. Wanamaker. "If you will come over here or to our New York store some morning when we have advertised a job lot of bicycles or some other things and look at the long line of people who are standing outside waiting for the doors to open, you will see how the advertisements in the newspapers are read."

"Then advertising is one of the chief elements of business success, is it not?"

"It is one of the elements, but not the chief," replied the great merchant.

"The chief element is getting what the people want, in keeping your eyes on the parts of the world where new things are made and in giving them the best of the newest things along the lines of their real or fancied needs. My aim is to get the goods. The advertisement is merely to tell the people that I have them. I like the advertisement which merely describes what we have in the store."

"How do you like doing business in New York?"

"Very much, indeed. Have you been in my store lately?"

"No, I have not," I replied.

"You ought to visit my store the next time you are in New York," said Mr. Wanamaker. "It is worth visiting to see the building, if for nothing else. A. T. Stewart was a genius. I have been surprised again and again as I have gone through that building, walking in that dead man's shoes, to find what a