

Written for this Paper.

## BUSINESS AND SUCCESS.

It may well be said that the West is and has been in a transition condition; that change is continuous and will be until an equilibrium is reached and methods are more or less assimilated to those of other and distant parts of this great country.

In nothing is this change more marked than in merchandising; and those who are familiar with the past could tell, if they would, many things which our present citizens would hardly credit, or at least realize. This city was once the absolute base of supplies. If anything was needed and it could not be furnished here, it could surely be assumed that it was not in the Territory. The people were hungry for goods of any and every kind, and each year's addition to the population only made supply more difficult. The Missouri river was a thousand miles away, and factories were further from the place of lading than that. Wagon facilities alone were available for us; while California had a seaboard and even for far off Oregon shipping around Cape Horn was comparatively easy. In those days any one who had a few goods could make money. We have heard of one who built his home from a few combs and buttons, and of another who made a fortune, which remains to this day, from the variety of small things like tacks, awls, screw rings, packing needles and similar insignificant oddments.

No wonder then the merchant on a large scale made money "hand-over-fist," to use an old phrase. He set his own price and conscience was the limit, this being elastic enough for any circumstances. Worse than this, the merchant dictated the price of produce also, when exchange was desired. Competition was impossible, for the supply was never equal to the demand, although remnants of some things might reach nearly to the following year's importation.

Now and then an observant man would remark in a depleted store, "Mr. Bell, no wonder you have to charge so much for goods, when you keep so many idle clerks around." "Well," was the response, "I hire my clerks to sell so many thousand dollars' worth of goods in a season or year, and if they do this in three months I am satisfied, and I do not know that any one else has anything to do with it." Few merchants in these days of competition would say this. Large houses have laid off in part some of their employees; others have dispensed altogether with valuable services in the spirit of retrenchment and imperative economy.

The times demand now a much closer attention to detail than in years gone by. More judgment is required in buying, more discrimination in credits, and vastly more push and enterprise in selling than was possessed by the most successful men of those intensely active days. There is all the time, though, a venturesome element which, from a love of change, from the possession of a little surplus means, or from the apparent success of another, enters upon unfamiliar fields, and as a rule with not unexpected results, for where experts

fail, ignorance can hardly predicate success. Trade statistics tell a fearful story of abortive efforts, of startled inexperience, of crushed hopes and wilted ambition, of failure and ruin, because only here and there a man can bear up under self-accusation of ignorance and inability in a tried direction; and where from native talent success could be almost prophesied, the influence of one failure enters into all effort in another, be its promise ever so great.

Fortunes have been invested and lost in this way. It requires something more than renting a building and fitting, then filling its shelves with goods, to secure business. It requires more than the walls and machinery, or the raw material and workmen, to make a factory a permanent and profitable investment. Half a million dollars in buildings and appointments, with an unlimited supply of beats, is not all that is required to make the sugar business what it should be. There are mountains of iron ore and coal in the south. Money could make iron there no doubt; but the investment would be a failure unless other equally important conditions were present also, or were created for the purpose—facilities for transportation, a certain market, prospective continuance of demand, and a remunerative price for the article produced.

There is glory in many an effort which fails; but there is tenfold more in that which compels success, which seizes a presented opportunity and then clings to it with a grasp that will not know defeat. It seems now as if one original stimulates a host of imitators or followers. The bicycle trader is a case in point. The newspaper venture always finds money or credit when failure is inevitable, and to become fully established would require carte blanche on the national exchequer. Competition "runs riot" here as it does in most other directions. Money can print, money can advertise, willing hands and active brain can produce, but circulation is that which makes continuance possible, same as demand for sugar, carpets, cottons and things of lesser note.

It is easy to see that changed conditions might have wrought severe disaster in Utah, had there not been financial and moral support at headquarters in this city. For it is not too much to say that not one in twenty of those engaged in merchandising outside of one or two places ever had any mercantile training. They knew little of goods, nothing in the way of business methods, and had to be educated by time, counsel and experience. That so few have failed can only be accounted for because of that honest, tractable, conservative, non-competitive method everywhere exhibited.

Yet there are vastly too many stores now for the needs of the people. One small settlement of twenty-five hundred persons lately visited had from fifteen to twenty stores within its limits. The remark was made that "if a few more" were thus engaged, every one could be "their own merchant." Then rivalry would cease and a greater unity of feeling would ensue.

The idea has prevailed that any one could fill two positions in life if incapable in other directions. One was farming, the other merchandising. And while the shoemaker was expect-

ed to know something of leather, the blacksmith of iron, and the carpenter of lumber, it was not necessary that the farmer should know anything of land or the trader anything of goods. Time and sad experience have demonstrated the fallacy of this conception, and men so infatuated have had to learn as opportunity served them, the same as in other directions.

Some have native talent and a certain adaptability, which under some conditions achieves fair success. But it cannot be hid from any observer that thoroughness is not a characteristic of Utah's teeming population. In scholastic matters how few can stand an examination, and become teachers? And this accounts for the fact that the overwhelming majority in this city are imported. It is a rare thing to find an artisan or mechanic (home raised) who becomes an expert, for apprenticeship is unpopular, and wage-earning mechanics have not time to educate the sons of another. It is uncommon in a store to find those who know anything of the goods they sell, where they grew or were manufactured, or differences in quality. Ask of tea, coffee, rice, nutmegs, pepper, and you will be surprised at the prevailing ignorance. In the dry goods, boots and shoes, clothing, hardware, the condition is very similar, and if anything is learned, it is only by the extra inquisitive, and not because of a qualifying educational course.

Every country store, too, carries a great variety, and to know the nature of that variety is given to but very few. Hence the necessity for dealing where there is confidence. For be it known, misrepresentation is as common in regard to merchandise as it is in the trading of a horse. All of which simply asserts that the days of ignorance ought to be passing away. Whatever a man's profession or calling, he should aim at proficiency. The world is overflowing with mediocrity and less than that already, and with changes that are round about and ahead of this community, it is the duty of every man who is ambitious of success to seek for a thorough understanding of the industry or occupation by which he expects to live. He should try to excel, to be an expert, to know all about that which he manipulates or deals in. Then for the highest success, he must seek for those business qualifications which enable a man to account for his labor or enterprise, and to know whether it pays him, or whether he is better fitted for something else, that he may be accounted among those who did not fail.

## MY TRIP TO MANONO.

SAMOA, March 20, 1895.

Brother W. G. Sears and myself left our mission home February 8th, and after a pleasant journey of two days we arrived at Salovi, our field of labor, having been unavoidably absent three weeks. The Saints were indeed delighted to see us and anxious to know why we were away so long. They said: "Our hearts rejoice this hour that we have the pleasure of again meeting." It is almost like home to meet with such kind friends who are ever ready to do all in their power to make us happy. We were soon provided with a basket of nice warm food,