

Merchants Princes of Chicago Talk About Success in Business

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CHICAGO, Nov. 12.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—If you want your blood stirred, come to the west. Pull up your generalities, dig yourself out of your surroundings and come where money is worth more than 3 per cent and every one is striving for a fortune. Boston and New York look upon themselves as the most important part of the United States. They are small in comparison with the great west, and by far more provincial than the average big city on the other side of the Alleghenies. They have forgotten that the giant of American progress, clad in his seven-league boots, has long since jumped the Appalachian range, has peppered the lake region and the Mississippi valley with towns and cities, has gone on over the Rockies, and that he now stands on the eastern shore of the Pacific reaching out for the business of the Orient.

Chicago a Busy City.
 I say this by way of prelude to an interview which I give you today from the twentieth century city on the twentieth century shore. Chicago has businesses which surpass those of New York, Boston or Philadelphia. It has one firm which does more merchandising than any other establishment in the world. This is Marshall Field & Co., which does a business of from \$50,000,000 to \$100,000,000 a year, which largely controls the wholesale trade of the west, and whose retail branch here has a greater army of clerks than that which Xenophon led on his march to the sea. The man I have interviewed for you was for years the leading spirit of Marshall Field & Co. He began as a clerk, became manager of the retail store and when he left it a few months ago he was one of the partners. Now he has a big dry goods establishment of his own, which he started last June, but which already employs thousands of clerks and takes up the best part of a Chicago block. This man's name is Harry G. Selfridge. He is one of the youngest of the successful business men of Chicago, and is well fitted to talk about the twentieth century merchant as he thrives in the great west.

The Twentieth Century Merchant.
 Said Mr. Selfridge in response to my questions:

"Merchandising is changing everywhere, and nowhere so much so as in the west. It has ceased to be a trade and is becoming a science. When A. T. Stewart had 30 clerks in his New York store it was considered a wonder. Now we have one retail dry goods establishment in Chicago which has 10,000 clerks and its sales amount to tens of millions. The standing of the merchant is rising. In our eastern states I am told certain classes sneer at the man engaged in trade. It is not so here. The merchant is as much respected as the lawyer or doctor. He looks upon his position as a profession and is proud of it."
 "What has caused the change?" I asked.
 "I suppose it is somewhat due to the growth of the modern store. Such a business today requires the very best ability to handle it. It needs large capital, wide knowledge and more than ordinary education and intelligence. The successful twentieth century merchant is a many-sided man. His goods come from everywhere and he must know the world and its markets. He must understand financial conditions and be able to profit by them. He has an army of clerks and he must have organizing capacity, a knowledge of men and the ability to make them take a personal interest in the business. He has to understand mechanics and labor-saving devices, to be something of an electrician and an engineer. He must, in short, be a professor of details, of values, of finance, of progressiveness, of public opinion, of publicity, of systems of fashion and of the world's markets. Indeed, our business is now a science which includes all sciences."

Dry Goods vs. Department Stores.
 "I suppose you refer to the department store proprietor?"
 "No, I am speaking more of the dry goods merchant, although the same might be applied to the department store merchant. There is a difference between the dry goods store, such as that of Marshall Field, my store, and other stores over the country, and the department store. Our stores have many divisions, but they are mercantile establishments, pure and simple, and we do not 'pull your teeth.' We take



HARRY G. SELFRIDGE

your photograph" or "cut your corns while you wait." We do not like to have the term 'department store' applied to us, and we call the different divisions of our business 'sections,' rather than 'departments.'
 "Well, then, Mr. Selfridge," said I, "has the great store, which sells almost everything under the sun, with many sections, come to stay?"
 "There is no doubt of that," was the reply. "Such stores are demanded by the times. They are in the interest of the consumer and are in accord with the spirit of modern progress. They may be and are injurious to the small dealer, but trade, as far as that is concerned, recognizes no law except the survival of the fittest, and the small dealer is crowded out."

"But will not this system keep growing until there are no small stores?"
 "There will always be small stores," said Mr. Selfridge. "But they will be restricted to localities where they are a convenience to the immediate neighborhood, or else to the smaller towns, away from the great centers. The retail business of the big cities will always be done in big stores."

Great Merchants' Trust.
 "But are not such stores against the interests of the consumer? Will they not monopolize trade, and then swallow up each other? Is there not danger that we may some day have a great merchants' trust, which will hold all consumers by the throat?"
 "Such a thing is not possible," was the reply. "I know it has been talked of, but each locality has its own peculiar needs and every large store has its own personality and following. Any attempt to combine stores would be resisted, and overcharges or large profits would induce immediate competition, resulting in new establishments. There is no danger of any mercantile trust ever monopolizing the business of the United States."

"I should think, Mr. Selfridge, that the twentieth century stores which you describe would be the death of individual ambition. In the past, with a few thousand dollars a clerk could open a store of his own. Now one must have a vast capital to do so."
 "It is true to some extent, but not altogether so. The clerk, on the other hand,

receives better wages. There is more demand for good men, and a better chance to rise. The clerk can still start a store in a small way, or he can make himself so valuable that his salary will be greatly increased."
 "Do you have trouble getting good clerks?"
 "The best are always in demand, and good men are steadily advanced," replied the merchant. "Clerks are always studied by their employers. Those of the lower grades are watched, and an effort is made to interest them in their work to the gen-

eral improvement of the business."
 "In the store of Marshall Field & Co. we offered \$1 for every suggestion of value made by a clerk, no matter what that suggestion was. We also gave \$1 to every merchant who pointed out an error or waste that might be remedied. I remember one of our clerks got a dollar for pointing out a leak in the water cooler on the third floor. We do the same in my store, and we also pay for any error or misstatement discovered in our advertisements, either by placard or by the newspaper. This is to show the clerks that our advertisements are to be read upon, and also to prevent any deception of the public by them."

Women Clerks.
 "What do you think of the woman clerk? Has she come to stay?"
 "She has a place of her own in the twentieth century store, and one which she will always hold. Women make excellent clerks, and in certain places do much better than men."
 "How about wages? Are women as well paid as men?"
 "No. But there is a reason why they are not. Their term of service is shorter and they do not secure the advance of salary which comes from a long stay in the same store. As a rule, the woman does not expect to make her employment her life work. She looks forward to marriage, and rightly so. Were it not for that she would soon become more experienced and would command higher wages."

Advice to Young Merchants.
 "Would you advise a boy to adopt merchandising as a profession?"
 "That would depend upon the boy," said Mr. Selfridge. "If he has a bent for merchandising his opportunities will be as great there as in any other profession. If he has no such bent he had better choose something else. I cannot recall when I did not want to be a merchant. I remember I had a station on the boat and played at selling goods when still quite small, and many of my school vacations were spent in the store."
 "Give me some suggestions for the boy who wants to succeed."
 "I would advise him to do his very best when he starts out and to study how to do it better and better. Every clerk should try to make himself valuable to his employer. He should fit himself for the next position above that which he holds, and it will not be long before that position is vacant. One secret of success is in using the time not required for business, sleep or meals for study. One should read good books and cultivate the habit of reading. He should make his reading of a practical nature and such that it will be of practical use to him. I know one of the best railroad men in the country who began life

as a deck hand on a Mississippi steamboat. He worked at first for \$3 per month, but devoted his leisure to study, and he is now a leader of men."
 "There are some things that every young man must have, if he would succeed," Mr. Selfridge continued. "He must be honest. He must have good habits; he must have tact, judgment, energy and stick-to-it-iveness. I don't know that I should advise him to go to the big cities. They perhaps offer examples of the greatest success, but the competition there is also the greatest. I would especially advise the

young man not to be in too great haste about getting married. It is said that it costs no more to support two persons than one, but that is a mistake. It does cost more, and the young man should be sure he can support a wife and still have something left before he marries. Among other qualities necessary to success are economy, willingness, prudence, self-confidence, pleasant manners, an even temper and a good personal appearance."

Marshall Field on Success.
 In connection with this advice of Mr. Selfridge I have some words to young men from Marshall Field on the same subject. They were written some time ago in a letter to Newell Dwight Hillis, now pastor of the Plymouth church, in Brooklyn. A condensation is as follows:
 "I would say that the young man should first consider his natural bent or inclination. He should take stock of himself, find out what business he is adapted for and get into that business with as few changes as possible. Once in, he should strive to master the details of the business and to make his services of value, wherever he is. He should also be alert, and be ready to seize opportunities when they present themselves."
 "The trouble with most young men," continued Mr. Field, "is that they do not learn thoroughly. They work carelessly, forget that what is worth doing at all is worth doing well, and degenerate into drones, relying upon chance to bring them success. The business world is full of such young men; they are content with simply putting in their time somehow and drawing their salaries, making no effort whatever to increase their efficiency and thereby enhance their own and their employer's interests. There are others who want to do what they are not fitted for and who thereby waste their lives in what might be called misfit occupations. It is far better to be a good carpenter or mechanic of any kind than a poor business or professional man."

Build Up Your Character.
 Marshall Field is very emphatic on the duty of young men to pay attention to the formation of their characters. One should do everything that will tend to build up a strong personality. Says he: "The young



MARSHALL FIELD.

man who has a conscience that cannot brook the slightest suspicion of wrongdoing, that insists on trustfulness, honesty and strict devotion to duty has a fortune to begin with. It is often the case that boys of excellent ability are ruined by evil associates, and they cannot, therefore, too early guard against forming friendships with those whose tendency is to lead them on a downward path. They should be careful of their companions and should cultivate acquaintances whose conduct and influence will enkindle high purposes. The ability to restrain one's appetite, passions, tongue and temper is of the first importance. One must be master and not slave of himself; if he cannot govern himself he cannot govern others. Indeed, a good character is vastly more important than a great fortune. A United States senator who died recently, wrote the following in his will: 'I hope that my sons will share all early in life, realizing that the only thing more difficult to build up than an independent fortune, is character and that the only safeguard of character are the Ten Commandments and the sermon on the mount.'

Why Business Men Fail.
 Every one knows of Marshall Field's wonderful success. He was raised on a farm in northern New York, and began his business life as a clerk in a country store in Pittsfield. He came to Chicago a few years before the civil war and entered a wholesale house as a clerk. Four years later he went into business for himself and after the war was over, the firm was reorganized under the name of Field, Palmer & Leiter. The partners were Marshall Field, Potter Palmer and Levi Z. Leiter. Two years later Potter Palmer retired and devoted his time to the hotel business, and the firm became Field, Leiter & Co. About twenty-three years ago Mr. Field sold out and since that time the firm has been Marshall Field & Co. Now, no one but himself knows what Marshall Field's worth is, but I venture he knows it to the cent. There is no doubt but that he can count his money by the tens of millions, and that he has always been a success along the business road of Chicago, which is marked by thousands of failures. In this letter to Parson Hillis he answers the question: "Why do so many business men fail?" Here is what he says:
 "If the elements herein outlined promote success the logical conclusion is that a disregard of them betokens failure. The man who is characterized by want of foresight, idleness, carelessness or general shiftlessness cannot expect to succeed. There are other causes, however, such as extravagance in living or living beyond one's means, outside speculations, gambling, etc.; want of proper judgment, over-estimating capacity or undertaking more than capital would warrant; or, in other words, attempting to do too large a business on insufficient capital; assuming too heavy liabilities and relying on chance to pull one through; lack of progressiveness, or, in other words, dying of dry rot, and, also, selling on too long time."
 "Another cause of failure is trusting one's goods to irresponsible people. Retail business should always be done for cash. There is no longer occasion for long credits, as even the farmer of these days can get cash for anything he has to sell."
 "Merchants who keep their business well in hand, who sell for cash and pay for goods on short time, taking advantage of all cash discounts, who keep good habits and give strict attention to business very rarely fail." FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Entertaining Little Stories for Little People

The Little Birds' Journey.

ON THE shores of the great ocean some tiny brown birds were hopping about. They were on their way to the warm southland, where they were going to stay all winter. They had come a long, long way, flying in the daytime and at night sleeping in the trees with their heads tucked under their little wings. But now they had come to the great ocean and their little wings were not strong enough to carry them across it.

Over in the meadow they saw a woolly sheep. "Perhaps," chirped one little bird, "he would carry us on his back."
 "Baa, baa," answered the sheep. "I cannot swim. Ask a fish."

So they hopped down to the water and called to the great fish who lived in the water: "Will you take us over the ocean to the southland?"
 But the fish called back: "I cannot fly and you would drown in the water. Ask the crane."
 Just then a large bird with snowy white feathers and broad wings came flying past. It was a crane. The birds chirped and the crane came down on the sand. "Hop on to my back and I will carry you to a land where the grass is green and the little worms crawl right into your mouths."
 So the little birds' troubles were over, for the crane spread his wings and car-

ried them away over the ocean to the southland.

Making a Tool Cabinet.

A very convenient tool cabinet that will hang against the wall may be made with two doors of nearly equal size, so that there will be four instead of two surfaces against which to hang tools. The body of the chest is thirty inches high, twenty inches wide, and nine inches deep, outside measure. It is made of wood three-quarters of an inch in thickness, fastened together with screws and glue and varnished to improve its appearance. One side of the cabinet is but three inches and a half wide and to this the inner door is made fast with hinges, so it will swing in against a stop moulding on the opposite side.

A small bolt on the door will fasten it in place when shut in, and on both sides of this door hooks and pegs can be arranged on which to hang tools. Inside the back of the cabinet hooks and pegs can be arranged also, for saws, squares and other flat tools. The outer door is provided with a side strip to take the place of the locking part of that side of the cabinet and when the doors are closed in and locked the appearance of the chest will be uniform.

With a little careful planning and figuring it will not be a difficult task to construct this cabinet and the doors so that they will fit snugly and close easily.

Dolls of Long Ago.

The fond little mammas of today may be interested to know that thousands of years ago little girls were just as fond of dollsies as they are today. In searching through the ruins of the old Egyptian cities some dolls were discovered that are actually known to be 4,000 years old. That is, just a thousand times as old as a little girl 4 years old.

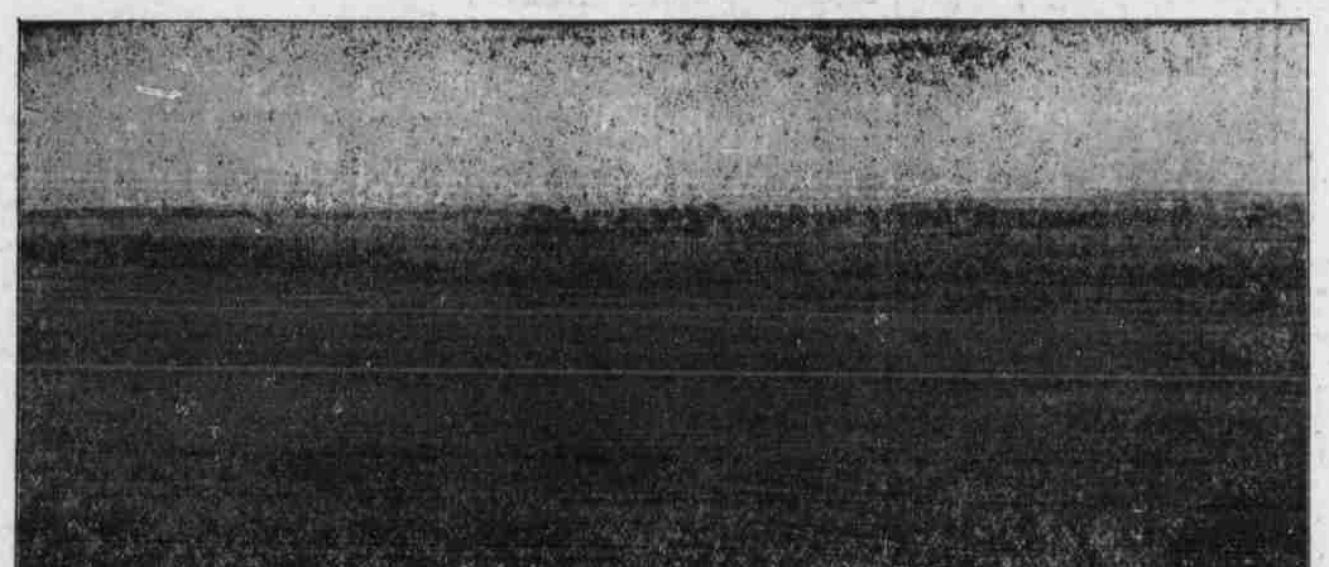
These queer old relics are, some of them, doll bakers and doll butchers; others are made of string and resemble the rag-dollies of today, except that their hair is made of threaded beads.

Prof. Bessey Describes Visit to the Minnesota Experiment Station



SPECIALLY DESIGNED TRESHING MACHINE FOR TRESHING THE GRAIN FROM EXPERIMENTAL PLATS SO AS TO SAVE EVERY KERNEL.

ON A WARM DAY in the latter part of July we left the capital city, running down the valley of the Red River and noting the promise of abundant crops on every hand. Corn was just tasseling out, being about ten days late, but of fine growth. Here and there the weeds had made too rapid a growth for the farmer, but on the whole the corn conditions were good. Wheat harvest was practically completed, the fields full of shocks, giving promise of a good yield. How much the rust had damaged the crop could not yet be made out. Our route took us via the Northwestern railway across the fertile fields of Iowa, filled with corn and grain and here and there was the same evidence of prosperity. Going north the corn was smaller in size and less in amount, until it practically disappeared as a farm crop in central Minnesota. Likewise the wheat and the other grains were less and less of it was fit for harvesting until we found none of it ripe enough for cutting, while much of it was yet very green. Here the hay crop was very promising and the average was large.
 A month later in passing over the same region the harvesting was entirely completed and much of the grain already threshed. In central Minnesota in this later view we found no grain at all, but in northern North Dakota and the adjacent portions of Assiniboia there were many fields yet uncut, and some quite green. Thus the harvesting season took a month in passing northward a little more than 600 miles. Roughly speaking we may say that this year the ripening of wheat proceeded northward at the rate of about seventeen



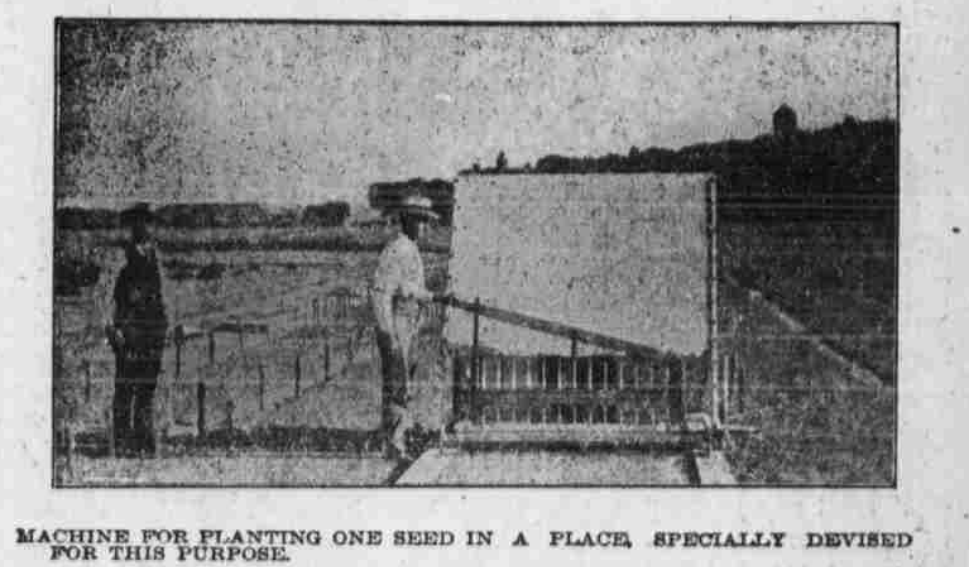
GENERAL VIEW OF THE EXPERIMENTAL PLATS

miles a day. It will be interesting to note this matter in other years so as to see whether the rate is the same every year.

Forests and Prairies.
 In Minnesota the country was originally divided into the forests and the prairies. The forests extended from the north and northeast southward to the valley of the Minnesota river, while the prairies covered the southern part of the state, and a strip along the Red river of the north in the western part of the state, to the Canadian line and beyond. Well back in the forests the trees were principally pines, while as we approach the prairies the trees disappear, and the trees are of the deciduous species. At the border between the two regions, the trees are bur oaks, lindens, ashes, box elders, aspens, willows, etc., most of which are well adapted to soil and climate. The prairie vegetation is composed of a great variety of species. Between Minneapolis and St. Paul is located the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station and the School of Agriculture. Here we spent a day most profitably, visiting the buildings (about twenty) and inspecting the plats of grain and forage plants growing in the fields. Several new buildings are now in course of construction, among which is a brick building for the Department of Animal Husbandry, in which there is to be a stock pavilion with an area 75 by 100 feet. Ground was being cleared for an administration building costing \$200,000. In spite of these additions the school will continue to be cramped for room. The present accommodations are ample for 600 students, while the actual attendance the past year was somewhat more



NEAR VIEW OF THE EXPERIMENTAL PLATS, BEANS IN THE FOREGROUND AND WHEAT IN THE BACKGROUND.



MACHINE FOR PLANTING ONE SEED IN A PLACE, SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR THIS PURPOSE.

of the careful work in plant breeding it was necessary to invent and construct new implements and machines. Some of these we saw, and looked over very carefully, following the explanations made by the enthusiastic professor. In some of the most careful experiments it is necessary that but one seed, and no more, should be dropped in each place, and that these places should be exactly the right distance apart. So the professor had to devise a particular kind of machine to do this work. Another specially devised machine was a treasher with which to thresh out the product of the experimental plats, in such a way that not a single seed should be lost, and at the same time not to add stray seeds from other plats. The machine is run by an electric motor so that it is under perfect control. I was told that duplicates of these two machines had been made for the Nebraska experiment station.

In driving over the well kept farm I was impressed with the feeling that if the people of the country could only realize how carefully and conscientiously scientific men work in order to solve the problems of the farm we should hear less complaint as to the cost of maintaining the experiment stations. Here are a dozen or more men who are giving their best years to the solution of problems which will add to the wealth not of themselves but of others. Not only by the results of his labors. At the end of years of hard work the scientific man will be personally no better off from a money point of view than when he began, while he will have added millions to the valuation of the farm property of the state.

But we cannot linger. We look at hun-

dreds of plats of plants of all kinds and listen to the explanations of the professor. We note in passing the fields of alfalfa and red clover, for we are near the northern limit of these two forage plants. By selection promising varieties of both of these plants have been secured, and this feat alone will eventually return many times more to the state than the station has received from the treasury. Incidentally, while driving among the plats of promising things, we learn a little philosophy when the professor tells us that he does not give away the seed of his good varieties. He sells them at good prices. In this way only the people who are sufficiently interested to care for particular seeds apply for them, and moreover a man is always much more careful of a thing that costs him a good sum than when he gets it for nothing. There is a good deal in this, and I suspect that this partly accounts for the great success the professor has had in disseminating his new and improved varieties.

We are compelled to hurry away, wishing that we could spend a much longer time here. We catch our train and soon speed away northwest over the rich country, well with farms. For a time we pass through a region in which here and there are tamarack swamps, alternating with rolling land of fertile loam. Gradually the trees become smaller and fewer, and we find ourselves passing out from the western part of the state, and finally into the broad and level valley of the Red river of the north. Here this paper may well be brought to a close, reserving further reference to this valley for a subsequent communication.

CHARLES A. BESSEY.