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The Science of Business Building.

By MR. ARTHUR FREDERICK SHELDON, CHICAGO.

ADDRESSING the Canadian Club on "The Science of Modern Business Building," Mr. Arthur Frederick Sheldon, of Chicago, said:—

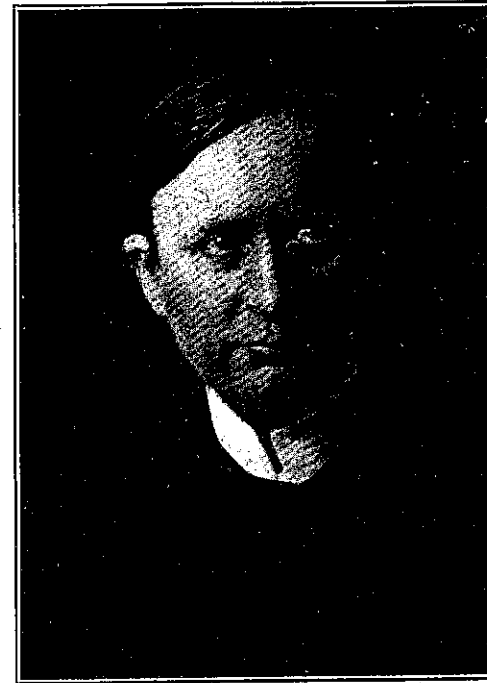
Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Canadian Club,—
The element of time enters into all man's institutions. Time is fleet as a bird on the wing, and recognizing that time is indeed valuable to busy men, I shall cut out all introduction and come at once to the theme we are to discuss together. There is much homely sense in the old adage: "Have something to say, say it, and quit talking." I must say, however, that the honor of addressing you is appreciated and the kindness of those who have looked after my welfare since I came within your city gates.

As to my subject, "The Science of Modern Business Building." What is science? Herbert Spencer has defined science as "organized knowledge." Art, on the other hand, is doing, or performance. In practising the art of anything man applies the knowledge gained in the science of it. All knowledge is not scientific. To be that it must be organized—obviously it must be tested truth.

What is "business building?" By the term I mean the adding to a business already begun, the art of making each customer the first link in an endless chain to bring more. It is the repeaters that count.

Business building implies the getting of business, but the getting of it in such a way that it is continuously added to by the influence of those already dealt with.

There was a time when the business of trade was looked down upon and shunned as an occupation unworthy of refined intellects or gifted natures. That day is now passed by in the march of progress and the business man is coming to be looked upon more and more as a professional man. A profession is a science practiced, and a science, as we have seen, is organized truth—classified common sense. We have one group of lawmakers to govern us, we have soldiers to guard us, we have ministers to minister to our spiritual welfare, and physicians to minister to our physical welfare, and now great-



ARTHUR F. SHELDON.

est of all is our business needs. Science has heretofore not entered to the same extent into the business group. Yet science is as necessary in business building as in mechanics or chemistry. Can we, then, organize for successful scientific business building?

The basis of organization is classification. First, then, we have the salesman, which includes every individual in the institution from office boy to president; second, we have the customer, the study of him and his requirements; third, we have their relation to the thing they are selling; fourth, the knowledge of the abstract thing, the sale itself; fifth, the relation of employer and employee.

Business Building is a great theme—so great that in the thirty minutes at my disposal I shall merely attempt to deal with the first element, the salesman, the individual.

The commercial unit in each business community is the business house or concern, be that an individual business, a partnership or a corporation. The unit in the business house is the individual. Make each individual right, and the institution as a whole will be all right. System, order, is one of nature's first laws. Great men and great institutions reflect these laws, but you may have the best mechanical systems which the thinking, remembering and imagining powers of man can invent, and still they will be a failure in operation unless the man or men and women back of the system is right. If it were not for "man" there would be no business. Make the man right and his business will be right. The work of making the man right, the problem of self-development, of scientific human culture, is the problem of problems, not alone in business, but in all walks of life.

Each individual in business, employer or employee, should study self to the end of developing individual power to the highest possible degree. Man is a bundle of wonderful possibilities, these being locked up in the positive faculties, body, mind and soul. Success of the permanent and increasing kind is not a matter of luck or chance. It is governed by natural law. The discernment and observance of these laws is a big problem. The problem is therefore in the final analysis, man building. Make him right and the work takes care of itself. Veteran graduates in the school of experience are entering into the philosophy of which I stand as champion. You may have the greatest mechanical system in the world, but the final analysis must take you back to the men and women themselves.

So, too, there are units in the units, faculties and qualities, which, combined, make the abstract man. We can but touch upon it here, but there are a few thoughts which each of us as business builders should consider. They are the elements, the fundamentals, the verities that go to the heart of things.

First, if each individual, from office boy to president, would realize that his efficiency depends upon the degree of supervision which his work requires, there would be a mighty impetus in individual results. Ask the question, "Have I done everything I would have done had my employer been where he could see?" In other words, "Have I needed supervision?" Supervision is made necessary by reason of two classes of errors: first, sins of omission; second, sins of commission. How shall we get after those two thieves who steal our value? Through those we sin against self, against employer and against society.

There are two classifications in human nature, the good and the bad, the positive and the negative. Carefulness (the positive) has as its negative carelessness; courage and fear; truth and falsehood; honesty and dishonesty; faith and doubt; ambition and indifference; energy and laziness; intelligence and ignorance; strength and weakness; health and sickness; activity and inactivity, and so it goes, everything in the analysis of man in all his faculties and qualities. Every sin is traceable to one or more of the negatives.

How are we to get rid of the negatives? By developing the positives. Just as the darkness must go when the light comes, so the negatives are banished by the advent of the positives. How are the positives developed? There are two processes: the eductive, from the Latin to draw out, plus instruction, or the filling in of useful knowledge. Together, these processes constitute true education, which is a life-long process. Practice the use of the positives.

The result will be right. Ah, but, you say, that may be all right physically, but I am a slave to heredity. When Burbank can make the thornless cactus, the pitless plum, and the fadeless flower, it is time for the human plant to awaken to the fact that he need not go through life a slave to the influence of heredity or environment. But these play a part in the life of each, but a knowledge of the laws of mental and physical growth, plus the conscious application of them to the problem of self-development, make the present environment more potent than heredity, which is but the sum of all past environment.

As the body is educated its positives are drawn out. They develop endurance, which is a splendid asset. But you may have the endurance of a Hercules and fail if the next essential is wanting. The thinking, remembering and imagining powers if developed produce ability or intellectual capacity. Men should be trained to think. Many men only think they think and some only think they think they think. We should realize the outside world as the great mental workshop, bringing its material to us. Knowledge begins with sensation, the concept, the idea. A union of ideas forms a law, and when we consider laws we shall become scientists in business.

But if we possess durability and ability and lack reliability, we may be nought but gifted criminals. Some men are simply honest because it is the best policy, when it is no longer the best policy then they are no longer honest. There must be a moral feeling susceptible of development. We should study the mind as we study the body. Study psychology. Oh, but, says one, what do I want with psychology? I am a hard-headed business man. Some men are so hard-headed that you can't get an idea into their cranium. The mental part is the dynamics of the human engine. There is the emotional side. You are influenced by thoughts brought into the mind, and thinking a bad thought is as serious as taking a poisoned oyster into the body. This is no new thoughtism; it is truth—facts that go to the eternal roots of things.

So you may have the endurance of a Hercules, the intelligence of a Bacon, and the reliability of a Christ and still in the business world there may be one thing lacking—the will. To will is to act, and the business world to-day is crying for men of action. Action is the result of will development.

The combined product spells success. Endurance, plus ability, plus reliability, plus action, equals Man with a big "M"—the kind of men and women needed in every business everywhere. Do not say it cannot be done.

Take the product into every department of business. Every business has a credit department, a buying department, a selling department and an advertising department. It should have more. It should have a humanity department. The solution of business building is, in the final analysis, man building. It pays to cultivate the human plant. The object of the humanity department is to cultivate the human plant. An institution so equipped is destined to progress along the lines of natural law in harmony with the eternal laws of progression.

In the moment or so I have left let me allude to the relation of the individual in the institution to the customer. The greatest essential is to read human nature. The positive faculties are essential. The power to know what is. It is dangerous to handle the looker as you would the thinker. Too much cannot be said about strict and industrious attention to business. Said a young fellow to me once: "I'm earning my salary now, Mr. Sheldon, and I'm blest if I'll do anything more," only he didn't say "blest." "You're right," I answered, "yes, dammed all right." His river of progress was dammed. How many order takers have we instead of salesmen?

"How many salesmen have you on the road?" I once asked a large wholesale merchant.

"Two," was his reply.

"Two? I thought you had a hundred."

"Well," said the merchant, I have 118 taking orders, but there are only two salesmen in the bunch."

A lot of young fellows are ruining their eyesight looking for more pay. If they would only look for more work the more pay would take care of itself.

When Paderewski played before your late Queen she complimented him upon being a genius. "Ah, your Majesty," he replied, "the world now calls me a genius, but I used to be just an ordinary piano player." He practised hours, weeks, years before he was recognized. He was a drudge before he was a genius.

When Kubelik, the great violinist, played in New York he was asked to what he attributed his success. "To hard work," was his response. "I practised eight hours a day." Many musicians want to be Kubeliks who only practice four hours. So many people take it out in wishing. So many people have a wish-bone where the backbone ought to be.

One more question was asked the violinist. "What is your favorite selection?" His answer was, "The one I happen to be playing."

We want more Paderewskis and Kubeliks in the business world to-day, men whose favorite task is that on which they are engaged. What they achieved in their profession let those who are in business strive for in the business world, in the profession to which business belongs.