

WOMAN'S DEVELOPMENT IN BUSINESS.

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That there is nothing new under the sun is an assertion that was made by King Solomon thousands of years ago and accepted by many men of all ages to be true. Many philosophers also maintain that we are progressing in a circle—are reverting back to the ways and customs of centuries ago.

From the view-point of the creation of new material, the science of geology teaches us that King Solomon never uttered a more self-evident truth; and whether what the philosophers say is true or not, if history has correctly recorded the facts of past events, we know that many of our civilized nations could profit by much of what the ancients did.

In the world of business many improvements have been wrought upon old methods, but all of them are not new. To the minds of many there is a "new" woman, but in actuality she does not exist. Theories have been put forth to prove that she is new, but the only satisfactory evidence or conclusion agreed upon is that she is simply progressing, her natural tendencies not having changed one iota.

Ever since the days of Cleopatra, who, skilled in music and conversant in arts, was acknowledged to possess superior intellectual talents, women have been aggressive and their capabilities recognitory.

Early in the seventeenth century

there arose a class of women who won great celebrity by a display of knowledge upon subjects other than "How babies cut teeth." Prominent amongst them were Madame de Maintenon and Hannah More, two of the greatest women writers and educators of any age.

From that time until the present many women have assiduously sought the blessings of higher education, and a more accurate knowledge of all that pertains to business. They have surmounted many obstacles, and in this, the dawn of the 20th century, many links have been forged by them in the chain of "progress." There is nothing surprising in this statement, however, for the spirit of advancement is a legacy that has been handed down to them by the many brave women, who in the face of persecution and opposition, gave their lives and talents to the cause.

"As a nation grows its people are destined to feel the influence and its enlightened development." For thirty years the influence of progress has been so strong and benign upon the American nation that it was as impossible for women to remain in obscurity as it was for men to refrain from progressing.

The talk of American women being "new" is arrant nonsense, for they have been developing their latent talents, lo! these many years, and were only waiting until the world was ready for their reception. The practical business woman is the sole produce of America. In no other country does she enjoy the same privileges, liberty, independence and freedom of person as she does here.

If she be true to her calling she does not abuse these privileges—to the contrary—with all the knowledge gained from a free and unconventional education she takes her place in society as a faithful friend, in the business world as a judicious counsellor and in the home as a loving wife and queen. She is as womanly and gentle as was her grandmother; contact with the business world does not wear off the fineness which men so much admire in women if this quality be inherent.

Woman's entrance into the business world and her ratification along all lines

where she has the slightest chance for intellectual improvement has aroused strong prejudice against her advancement. It will take years of education, agitation and discussion to win her enemies over to the side of justice and truth.

The American business man possesses indomitable courage and business daring, in fact, all the essential qualities which go to make a successful business career. He is far ahead of the men of other nations in commerce and trade. He stops at nothing short of success. Why, then, so many of them are persistent in their endeavors to withhold all knowledge of business from their ambitious wives and daughters is one of the great puzzles of our national life. That opposition would arise from many indolent women was to be expected for woman's deadliest enemy is woman.

The taking away the right of franchise, the only means whereby the Negro can best assert his rights as a citizen and a man in many of the Southern states does not discourage the aspiring youth any more so than the barring of many doors of commerce and trade weakens the purpose and intentions of the energetic business woman.

It is generally conceded that woman is man's equal, intellectually, and is only in need of a broader education and greater opportunities to constitute her a dangerous competitor to him. This virtue has won, and will continue to win an enviable place for woman in the world of letters and trade.

Fair-minded business women do not ask for equal rights in a political sense, but they do ask that they be given an equal showing with man, with the same freedom to use accessible facilities as those which are accorded business men. It is hardly fair for man to declare that woman is not his equal, and is incapable of attaining the business heights he has reached and enjoys, while systematically withholding from her the very means by which he reached his giddy station in the commercial world.

Ruskin truthfully summarizes this question when he says, "We are foolish in claiming the superiority of our sex

to the other, in truth, each has what the other has not; one completes the other, and they are in nothing alike. The happiness of one depends upon each asking and receiving from each what the other only can give. We are no better or worse, higher or lower, because the loftiest ideals of humanity demands that each shall be perfect in its kind and not be hindered in its best work." This quotation is applicable to all art, science and trade where the question is one of ability and general fitness.

As women become more generally educated along all lines, their thoughts will become expanded, their energies increased and their homes conducted upon a higher plane intellectually, physically, morally and spiritually.

Why impede the progress of progressive women when they are heartily welcomed in all works of the home and church? If they are efficient co-workers in matters of reform they surely are able assistants in the business world and all other work which tends to promote progress to humanity at home and abroad.

The thirst and striving after business knowledge which many women display is good if not accompanied by the restlessness so characteristic of the American business man. Many leisure women, as well as business women, have been caught up in this electrical tide, and are fast drifting away from their true mission in life. No matter what a woman's work or aim might be she can never shake off entirely the responsibilities of the home, for they are joined by inalienable ties. The one link which brings her closer to God than any other power, the blessings of wifehood and motherhood, will not allow her to forget.

The business world is a field of labor and enlightenment, to which women hasten with high ambitions and great expectations, the home is the haven of rest to which she flees with exalted thoughts and tired brain, only too willing to receive the love, peace and quietude which daily awaits her within its sacred walls.

But why deviate from our subject?

We must write of woman as she is seen in the cold, work-a-day world and not as the regal queen of the hearth and home.

We encourage women to go into business, but not to the extent that there will be a general exodus, for all women are no more fitted to explore the mysteries of the business world any more so than all men are capable of becoming president of the United States.

To those who have inclinations for the work we would say, you must examine yourself carefully,—physically and intellectually—by the sharpest criticism imaginable before entering the arena, for you have chosen no small task. To be successful your life must be one of self-devotion and self-sacrifice. Many disappointments will appear, mighty obstacles will obstruct your way and only a strong determination to succeed or die in the attempt will remunerate you for your struggles.

Never be discouraged, for the thousands of women in positions of trust today is evidence of the fact that there is a growing demand for the work of competent women in all branches of business. There is no room for mediocrity; competency alone will stand the test of time.

At no time of our country's history have so many women been thrown upon their own resources as now. They have entered every accessible avenue of work. Many from sheer necessity, others from the knowledge to be gained by contact with business people.

There is need of woman's work and much good in it, but there can be seen a growing evil. Many employers in their greed for gold are making women "hewers of wood and drawers of water." The strength of many young women is being wasted by laborious work in sweat-shops, factories and stores. Women bread-earners should be given work in keeping with their strength. Woman's labor, they say, is cheap, but the price given in exchange by the workers will be felt by coming generations.

In many branches of the professional, commercial and industrial world women

receive smaller wages than men, regardless of ability. This is unfair, for there should be no alignment drawn between the work of a competent woman and that of a capable man. Women should receive the highest price paid for their work and give in exchange the best knowledge they possess.

The necessity of becoming proficient in trades, as well as professions is fast taking possessions of Negro girls and women. This is one of the most gratifying results of higher education. All over the country our girls are seeking diplomas in these studies of their own volition.

Much of this awakening is doubtless due to the assiduous labors of Prof. B. T. Washington, who is leading thousands of Negro youths to that kind of an education which creates a demand for their services. Let our women continue to stimulate their dormant talents along these lines for their sphere of general usefulness is being supplanted by the well-trained, skilled white artisan. Look well to your laurels of old, dear sisters.

One of the main solutions of this much-talked-of race problem lies in the proper training of every Negro child in some profession, trade or economic science. When we as a race prove our own worth and strength of purpose along these lines, then and then only will we be recognized as a power in the business world. We need more competent business men and women and less aimless ornaments, for such obstructions are detrimental to the progress of any race of people.

That the Negro is winning the recognition he so justly deserves is being demonstrated daily all over this country. An excellent proof of this statement is the National Negro Business League, which, only fifteen months old, is doing more in enlightening the world of the actual progress and status of our people than any other force.

It is by such movements as this that the actual progress and moral strength of the Negro should be measured. His standard should be gauged by the ener-

getic and aspiring element of the race, and not by the criminals in the jails, paupers in the poor-houses and idle vagrants to be seen loitering around the street corners and dram shops. This recognition is accorded other nations and should be given the Negro as well. The sins and weaknesses of other races are generally hidden from public gaze when the question is one of honesty, sobriety and morality, but those of the Negro are forever laid bare before the illuminable rays of the searchlight of public opinion.

Should this be his treatment when one thinks of the many eminent ministers, missionaries, doctors, lawyers, scholars, merchants, philanthropists and scientists who have won an international, as well as national reputation, by dint of their hard labors? Was not the Negro exhibit at the Paris Exposition a proud testimonial of this fact? Out of an unwholesome, immoral condition have arisen these grand beacon lights of the race. They should be encouraged, rather than discouraged, for the wonderful moral, mental and spiritual improvement made within the past thirty-five years.

What is true of Negro men is true of Negro women. The progress of one effects the other, each lifts as it climbs. The sooner our men see the wisdom of entering into all branches of business, the better it will be for the women who are qualified for the work, but cannot secure employment. We must first help ourselves before condemning other races for not assisting us along this line. We must work, hope and pray. A rich reward awaits those who have patience to endure until the end. John Lord has well said that "Extraordinary genius cannot forever remain hidden or forgotten. Sooner or later some one will bring forth the knowledge to light." As this rule knows no race, no class and no creed it is applicable to every one of you who yearn to earn a living and help swell the army of those who are developing praiseworthy business ability.