

GO WEST

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649539376

Go West by Percy Taylor

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
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PERCY TAYLOR

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BY

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LONDON:
WYMAN & SONS, GREAT QUEEN STREET,
LINCOLN'S-INN FIELDS.
1885.

2052. e. 8

GO WEST!

CHAPTER I.

WHO SHOULD GO.

AFTER a long residence in the Western States of America, I have just revisited England. The number of inquiries I have had here from persons, either intending to emigrate themselves or to send out relatives, has emboldened me to write a few chapters on the country itself; the most profitable businesses to engage in; the amount of capital they require to carry them on successfully; and the best means to acquire the necessary experience.

I have endeavoured to make my remarks as simple as possible, and to confine them to matters of minor detail, which will be of more use to people seeking information than the mass of statistics and geographical matter from which so many works on this subject have been compiled.

I have selected to illustrate at length a few of the businesses that can most suitably be engaged in by men who have had no previous experience. There are many others in which similar results may be obtained, but my space only allows me to notice them in a cursory manner. If this book, however, meets with the favourable reception I hope for, I may at a later date be tempted to treat some of them more fully.

I am sure that my remarks may be read with advantage by all intending emigrants, as I have used every endeavour not to make my figures too flattering, but to convey as clear an understanding as is possible in a short article of the nature and way of carrying on those businesses on which I touch.

Still, I do not pretend to give information enough to enable any one to at once engage in the businesses treated of, for I consider it essential that every one should have a certain amount of practical experience before engaging in anything abroad. The best means of obtaining this, which can only be gained in the country itself, I shall endeavour to point out.

In countries developing so rapidly as are the Western States of America and the Western provinces of the Canadian Confederation, there are very numerous opportunities for men with small capital to start a business in and around new towns rapidly increasing in size. If these men are economical at first, and curtail their expenses as much as possible in order to increase their capital, the growth of such towns, and further development of the surrounding country, may be depended on to extend their business, even more rapidly than they can their means to carry it on.

Yet, from long experience, I should say that not over ten per cent. of the people above the rank of a labouring man who go to America succeed there, though the reason of this is not hard to find.

A large percentage of such persons are idle, worthless fellows, without the elements of success in them under any circumstances; these their friends will find it cheaper to keep at home, for they almost invariably return there as soon as they have spent whatever money they have taken with them, which, with their passage-money, is entirely wasted; while, of those that are fairly steady, the greater number go without the slightest idea as to what they are going to do, or how they are going to do it; nor have they, in many instances, either capital or practical knowledge enough to command success. Unless a man has sufficient capital to start some business, or has some profession or trade at his finger-ends, he had much better remain in England, where he has friends who may be able to do something for him, than lose time and money in going to America, where he will have only himself to rely on. No one can hope to succeed there, or in any of the colonies, without hard work, application, and some experience. It does not follow, therefore, that, given both brains and

capital, success will be obtained. Prices, ways of conducting business, style of living,—all are very different in America to what they are in England; while numerous sharps are always on the look-out, ready to take advantage of the greenness of the new-comer.

Under no circumstances should I advise any to start for America unless they first find some reliable man to whom they can at once go, and with whom they can stay till they become somewhat accustomed to the country and its ways. New-comers are exposed to many temptations, and numbers of young men, who might otherwise have succeeded, have frittered away their capital hanging round the large cities of the East and West, deluding themselves with the idea that they were waiting for something to turn up.

It is a most injudicious thing for parents or relatives to intrust to young men considerable sums of money, when most probably they have the vaguest ideas of its value, especially on the eve of starting for a new country. The best policy is for any one going out from England to make arrangements so that any funds he may have at his disposal, beyond those absolutely necessary for his actual expenses, shall not follow him for at least a year; he cannot in less time acquire the necessary experience to enter into any business; if he has his capital at hand, he will be constantly seeing, what *he* may consider, chances that will tempt him to start for himself, and this, if yielded to, until he has learnt a business, means failure.

Having made up his mind to go to America, a man may either determine on the business he means to follow before leaving the old country, or he may reserve his decision till after his arrival there; but, having decided, he should make up his mind not to change, unless under heavy pressure, or it will be fatal to his chances of success.

As soon as you have determined what part of the country is best suited in climate and natural surroundings to your taste, the first step is to discover some reliable man living in the chosen locality.* If you can find no one among your friends or acquaintances who knows any one suitable,

* See author's advertisement at end of book.

search in a map till you find the name of some country town about where you want to go, and write to the post-master there, asking him to give you what particulars you may require about the country, and to send the name of some reliable man with whom you may stay, enclosing a post-office order for a small sum to reimburse him for his trouble. You will always get an answer, for a post-master in the States is a Government official of some importance, who is in most cases very civil, and ready to give information.

Having, by one of these means, found a suitable man, whose charge for board should not exceed £1 per week in a country town or 25s. in a city, you can make arrangements for staying with him as long as you may consider advisable.

After a few months' stay, an idea as to what business is best suited to your requirements should be arrived at.

Having now become somewhat used to the ways of the country, you should be able to find some one in the business you have selected who, in return for a small premium and your assistance in the office, will board you and teach you all that you require to know.

This, however, I do not regard as a particularly satisfactory arrangement for either party, as the teacher may not consider himself under it justified to use his pupil to the best advantage, or, if he does, the pupil may consider that more than a *quid pro quo* is demanded of him. If you have the spirit which is necessary for success, it will be better for you to take a situation with some man in the business you intend to follow, even if at first the salary is very small, and to make up your mind to do the very best you are able, no matter how hard you may find it at the commencement. By doing this, you should, at the end of your term of probation, have acquired a thorough knowledge of your business, and, in addition, have the satisfaction of knowing that you have not been drawing on your capital for your support in the interim. Let me again caution you that, having once made up your mind to engage in a business, you should not alter your determination, unless for the gravest reasons. To a green hand any business will probably seem hard and uninteresting at first, while you will be continually hearing

how much better your chances would be in something else ; once, however, your mind becomes unsettled, and you begin to change your plans, I regard your chances of success as poor : believe me, that, if you only stick long enough to the work you have taken up, it will grow on you, and, as you get more used to it, you will begin to like it.

There are few businesses a man can make a mistake in taking up in the States, if he will stick to it, no matter how depressed it may be at that particular time ; indeed, I think there is no better chance than to start into a business during a season of severe depression in it : you are then sure to learn to use every possible economy in conducting it, so that, when good times come again, you are enabled to reap the full benefit of them.

Another reason is, that a term of depression and low prices is sure to be followed at an early date by—to use an Americanism—a “boom.” The cause of this is to be found in the volatile nature of the majority of American business men : as soon as any particular occupation promises to become more than usually remunerative, hundreds leave their own business and at once embark in it, consequently it but for a short time, if ever, fulfils its early promise, because there are too many men at the game. As soon, however, as the depression, always caused by overtrading, sets in, most of the men go out and engage in something else that is commencing to boom ; then the trade, relieved from too much competition, rapidly becomes more profitable, and enables those who have remained steadily in it to reap a good harvest before it again becomes sufficiently remunerative to attract the floating element.

I will take, for an example of this, the business of baling and shipping hay, with which I am well acquainted. Some years ago there were but few men in the trade, all of whom were making a fair profit, though using the old-fashioned and somewhat clumsy beater-press. As the great cities grew larger, however, the demand for baled hay increased, for the supply of loose in the country surrounding them, within easy hauling distance, became too small to meet the demand ; about this time, too, the Detrick steam and movable horse-presses were invented. These, by their superior qualities and the smaller bales they made, gave a great impetus

to the trade; the price of baled hay in the cities went up, while the cost of pressing and shipping went down; baled hay, being so much more convenient to handle, became daily more popular, and threatened to soon drive the loose article out of the market. Farmers, at a distance from large cities, began to seed down more land; wild meadows never before used, except for pasture, were got into shape and cut; while hay-barns and presses sprang up at nearly every station where hay could be obtained. With what result?

In three years baled hay was selling in the large cities at less than the cost of production; while, worse still, owing to the inexperience and dishonesty of many of the newcomers, a large proportion of the hay had been baled when not in a suitable condition, or had been actually rotten when pressed. This, of course, buyers could not detect until the bales were opened for consumption, so, in consequence, of the losses they sustained in buying poor stuff, they soon began to discriminate against baled hay, and loose outsold it from 25 to 50 per cent.

A year or two of this broke many dealers, and disgusted more, who promptly left the trade. Those who were left in, being mostly men of capital and experience, were enabled to hold their hay to stiffen prices, which, in consequence, soon began to rise; this tendency is steadily increasing as buyers begin to regain confidence in baled hay. While many farmers are ploughing up their meadows, the cities are still growing, so in another year or two the supply will again fall below the demand, and high prices will be realised by those who have remained in the business.

Of course, after a short season of large profits, the outsiders will again rush in, and a like succession of fall and rise will take place.

The same thing has occurred, and is occurring, in most other businesses.

It will be noticed, from the above example, that a man who had left his own business to engage in the hay trade when prices were at their best would, in all probability, have been a heavy loser. He could not have had time to buy his machinery, erect his buildings, and work a trade together, before the fall came, while being new to the business, and not used to the small economies practised by