PART III AND JOURNAL JUNIOR

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PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF THE LATE DR. TALMAGE

First Impressions—His Father and Mother—A Storm-Sunday—His Leisurely Manner of Forgiving—Coziness as a Near Neighbor—Two Church Weddings—The Last Great Brooklyn Triumph—Railroading Through a Blizzard.

By WILL CARLETON.

WHEN I first came to New York, some years ago, I utilized the first Sunday by taking a Fulton ferry boat, landing in Brooklyn, and climbing the sloping, densely populated hill, to Beecher's church.

But he was out of town lecturing, and somebody else was in the pulpit; and I walked away with a discontent which I did not take any particular care to conceal from a good-natured looking burgher who stood at the doorway of his house, sunning himself.

"Why don't you go and hear this 'new light,' up on Schermerhorn street?" he asked. "He's almost as good."

So to Schermerhorn street I wended my way, and found the "new light"—just commencing his sermon. He was a tall, bony, angular man over 6 feet high, and as wide as a spacious pulpit-platform would allow him to be—wide in the sense that he could occupy every inch of that restrum within sixty seconds and any given time. His face was thin; sandy Burnside whiskers ornamented it. His voice was harsh though strong. His gestures were such as the average elocutionist would promptly condemn. "Where is his drawing power?" I mused; for I was standing up for lack of a seat, in that massive audience.

The answer came in the very next sentence; it contained a clear-cut, startling, oratorical figure, that caught you by the collar and held you, whether you would or not. It was a prose-poem in twenty words.

"I wonder if he can do that again, or if it's his per-epigram of the day," was the next thought.

He did it again and again. He seemed to be so full of that sort of thing, that he had hardly time to give them all out. Independently of its religious character, his sermon was a literary feast—or rather a series of literary electric shocks.

Candor compels me to admit that I had, during the preceding week, attended the theater six evenings in succesion; for a student just out of college restrictions is prone to indulge himself somewhat when he gets into a city. But during all the six nights, I had seen no acting like this—had found no stage—however large the company—lighted up with attractions like this; no scenery equal to that which he drew with his own unaided tongue.

So far as the way-down subject-matter of the discourse was concerned, there was nothing particularly new; you could go into the church of any good old Presbyterian divine and hear exactly the same doctrine. But when it came to the manner of stating those doctrines then it was that the excitement commenced.

His ideas of the fallibility of earthly grandeur had been preached again and again; but probably no one had counselled people to ask the French guillotine in Madame Tussaud's museum, concerning the queenly necks it had discovered. His views of eternal punishment were as orthodox as if they had been brewed a hundred years before; but he alone asserted, in those same words, that "Hell is a great metropolis of suffering." I had heard infidels denounced, but had never before imagined that they gathered all the divine teachings, and under them lighted the fires of their own wit and scorn and sarcasm, and then danced in the light of that blaze, and then scratched amid the rubbish for something with which to help them in the days of trouble.

And when he was through, he referred to a great shipwreck that had recently taken place, and said, solmenly, and impressively:

"Toll, toll the bell for the spirits of those who were lost beneath those murderous waves!"

And immediately, from the regions of the belfry, came the half-muffled sounds of the tabernacle-bell—tolled by the hand of the sexton, who was, it seems, a coadjutor in this impressive speech. Talmage seemed that morning like a John Knox, a George Whitefield, and a Lorenzo Dow, all rolled into one.

Preaching to Imaginary Audiences.

I was a few years later to become a near neighbor of this unique man—and to see and hear him under all sorts of conditions, and in almost every mood. He had been a farmer's boy in New Jersey, he told me, and had preached many a sermon to the night woods and winds—imagining that large audiences sat before him. His father was a strong, rather austere man, who was stern and sturdy enough to be elected sheriff of the county. His mother was a poet in prose—never telling a fact in plain words if there was a figure with which to illustrate it. "De-Witt, bounce up like a lamplighter!" she would call from the bottom of the stairway, on a cold winter morning, while he yet lingered in his warm bed. "The dear sweet woman looks like a picked canary," she would say, upon returning from some ministration of love and charity. "He pours the oil of gladness into leather bottles, and then seals them up too tightly," she remarked, of a dull preacher.

But wherever he procured his genius—whether from father or mother, or both—he was one of the mental and heart-phenomena of the nineteenth century—in two-thirds of which he lived, and half of which he kept aglow with his oratory. Although one might not be a regular attendant at his church, it was an unmeasured luxury to have him so near by. If you asked an out-of-town visitor what he or she wanted most to see or hear, the first answer was generally, "Oh, Beecher and Talmage: of course!"—and Beecher's name was not always mentioned first.

Took Advantage of Circumstances.

If there was any particular event that occupied the public mind, his quick perception always enabled him to take advantage of it. One morning I happened into his church during a severe storm. It was such a sturdy mixing-up of the elements that many of his flock had stayed in their home folds, and the great shoals of transient curiosity-seekers were constrained to keep away; but the service went on with, if possible, more elaborate care than ever. I stayed that morning only during the public perusal of Bible verses, being really on my way to another church; but what I heard was characteristic. He had gone through the sacred book, found about everything that related to storms, and drawn from it every lesson he could, and gave the result to his audience. It was a novelty to see a clergyman thus take advantage of even an adverse circumstance, and talk of the weather through the Bible.

On one Thanksgiving Day, he had his great church trimmed with agricultural produce, from all over the country, till it looked like a palatial barn. His pulpit was made into a miniature wheat stack, and a fine basketful of potatoes, enough of them just now to command a goodly sum, lay near his feet. It was a productive year, and among its products was a great sermon. He always drew some of his best illustrations from flowers and fruits, and on this day he had them in evidence all about him.

I do not recall very much humor, either of matter or manner, in connection with the many-score times I have heard him. Unlike Beecher, he generally kept preaching and "joking" entirely separate. At public dinners, however, he was the pattern of humor, and many others as well as myself will remember the ludicrous stories he could tell on such occasions, such as that of the man who was so stingy that he used a wart on the back of his neck as a collar-button.

Talmage as a Neighbor.

As a neighbor, he was cozy and companionable as so busy a man could be. Unlike most brilliant men, he was a fine listener—even to the most commonplace people; and seemed always more anxious to acquire than to give out information.

Much of his advice to newer men in the world was worth an every-day remembering. "Don't be in too much haste to fight enemies, my boy," he would say. "Ten to one they are doing you good, and you ought to pay them a salary, for the help they give you. Some of my best advertisements have been written by my foemen. Even from the standpoint of policy, it is best to 'turn the other cheek also,' especially if the attacking force is nothing but the wind of an enemy's words. Not only on account of the right, but from policy also, I am never in haste to demolish my enemies. They are doing me good, in a variety of ways."

There are reasons, however, to believe that he was not a complete adept in the matter of forgiving. "You must forgive your enemies, my good friend," he said to a lady who was consulting him, "but," he added with a twinkle in his eye "I think it's entirely right that you should take your time for it."

In his own house, or in the home of a friend, he was as gay and gossipy as if he were an ordinary man, instead of the most popular preacher in the world. His good nature and liberality were proverbial among those who lived near him. He used to relate, with great glee, the story of an inebriated son of a Virginia family who called one evening and insisted upon financial help, on the grounds, first, that he "needed it," and, second, that he lived in the same city as did a married daughter of Dr. Talmage. As his breath and manner did not indicate that he would spend the money in a wise manner, he was dismissed with good advice instead; but he declined to leave the block, and spent a half hour parading up and down in front of the house quoting such passages of scripture as: 'Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees!" "It is easier for a camel," etc., etc., and various other selections to indicate that he was bearing the martyrdom of a wealthy man's snubbing. A policeman finally came up to take him away, but Dr. Talmage, who had been much amused at the cleverness of the renegade, begged him off, gave him some money and told him to go his way and sin no more. "But I'm afraid he left the 'no' out," the preacher used to add, with a smile.

Twice I saw in the Talmage church that solemn ceremony—the marrying of a pastor's daughter to the man of her choice, by the pastor himself. The spacious auditorium being in amphitheatrical form, it seemed as if the event were taking ing place in the midst of some gigantic family circle. The words spoken by the father were the most original of any I ever heard pronounced at a marriage ceremony; and were fraught with the deepest of feeling. As I remember these two brilliant functions, the sad contrast rises in my mind, of Miss Maud's sad wedding the other day in Washington, when that same father lay in an upper room, unable to participate in, or even know of, what he would have so heartily furthered could he have done so.

Deference to Wife.

The first Mrs. Talmage, like the last one (and, I believe, the first one, although I never knew her), was a most efficient aid to her husband, in many ways. She garnered the large sums that came from various sources; she attended to his wide and varied correspondence; she was not only his wife, but, in a manner, his guardian.

More than that, her observation was so varied and acute, and her imagination so vivid, that there is no doubt she helped him very much in gathering material to enrich his many sermons and literary work. She was always on the qui vive for subject matter of this kind.

Dr. Talmage's deference to his wife's opinions was something amusing. "I had always wanted a tall white hat," he said, one time, laughingly, "but she told me it would not become me, and resolutely resisted my purchasing one. But while traveling in Scotland, it was arranged that she should take the trip to Inverness by rail, and that I should go by boat, up the long and picturesque Calidonian canal. While waiting for the boat, I saw a tall white hat that exactly pleased me, and so I bought the forbidden article, and started off (as might have been said if it were a piece of feminine headgear) in fine feather.

"But I had not gone far when, alas! a gust of wind lifted my new tile gracefully from my head, made a balloon of it, then transformed it into an airship (which all my fellow passengers greatly admired), and afterwards turned it into a parachute, which gradually subsided into the canal, some distance away, and floated gracfully away forever—leaving me hatless. This incident taught me always to obey my wife, concerning articles of dress."

Hygienic Ideas.

Dr. Talmage had a great many very sensible hygienic rules and expedients, and I was greatly surprised to know that he had yielded, even at his age, to anything less than an accident. He seldom failed to take a nap, soon after luncheon. "I awake from it invigorated," he said. "It gives me two mornings every day." When he went rambling in the park near his house in Brooklyn, he acted upon the principle that walking was not really exercise, and so waited till no one was in sight, or rather till he was in sight of no one, and ran. He was to some extent a hygienist, although exactly how thorough a one, I do not know.

Most of his life in Brooklyn was full of stress and struggle: the building of three tabernacles, one after another, with all the wear and tear of raising money for the same, was enough to wear upon even his sturdy constitution. At last, everything seemed like plain sailing; and thousands of his fellow-Brooklynites gathered in the Tabernacle to bid him goodbye before he took a trip for rest and recuperation across the ocean.

He seemed upon these two evenings as of he stood at the topmost round of fame; some of the best minds in the country were there, praising him in a gigantic and brightly decorated tabernacle, and the audience cheered him to the echo. He sat calmly amid it all. "Sometimes I had to work a little to keep my balance, amid so much adulation," he said to me, afterwards, "but it can be done on all occasions, if one goes at it resolutely."

In a day or two he preached his last sermon before starting off on the much-needed vacation; and almost before the great congregation filed out of the building, the edifice was on fire, and consumed before his very eyes. But with magnificent nerve and temper, he proceeded upon his trip, leaving the ashes of his buried hopes behind him, but still hoping for a brighter future.

The last day I ever spent with him was in Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. I was just coming out of a dining-room car on a train that was crashing through the coldest of western drifts, and making its way toward Chicago as well as it could. The present Mrs. Talmage, a charming and tactful woman, was with him, and we were not long in organizing ourselves into a triangular party, in whiling away the long miles.

We found that on arriving at Chicago, we both had engagements that evening, not far from each other, on the Baltimore & Ohio railroad; but as we were an hour late, our train would naturally be gone before we arrived there. "We'll have to give it up, and go to a hotel and spend the day," he remarked.

But I was anxious to get through, and had an idea that, with Dr. Talmage's assistance and influence, the Baltimore & Ohio train could be held. I represented to him that hundreds of people were expecting to hear him that evening; that it would or would not be one of the great occasions of their lives, and that he ought to make some exertion to get there.

Looking at it from this standpoint, his feelings seemed touched, as were those of his excellent wife; and a campaign of telegraphing was commenced to get them to hold the train.

When we rushed into Chicago, however, it had left three minutes before our telegrams arrived. But the dining car was still in South Chicago, waiting to run up and join the main train at the junction. If we could drive at breakneck speed to an Illinois Central substation and catch a suburban train there, we might get to South Chicago in time.

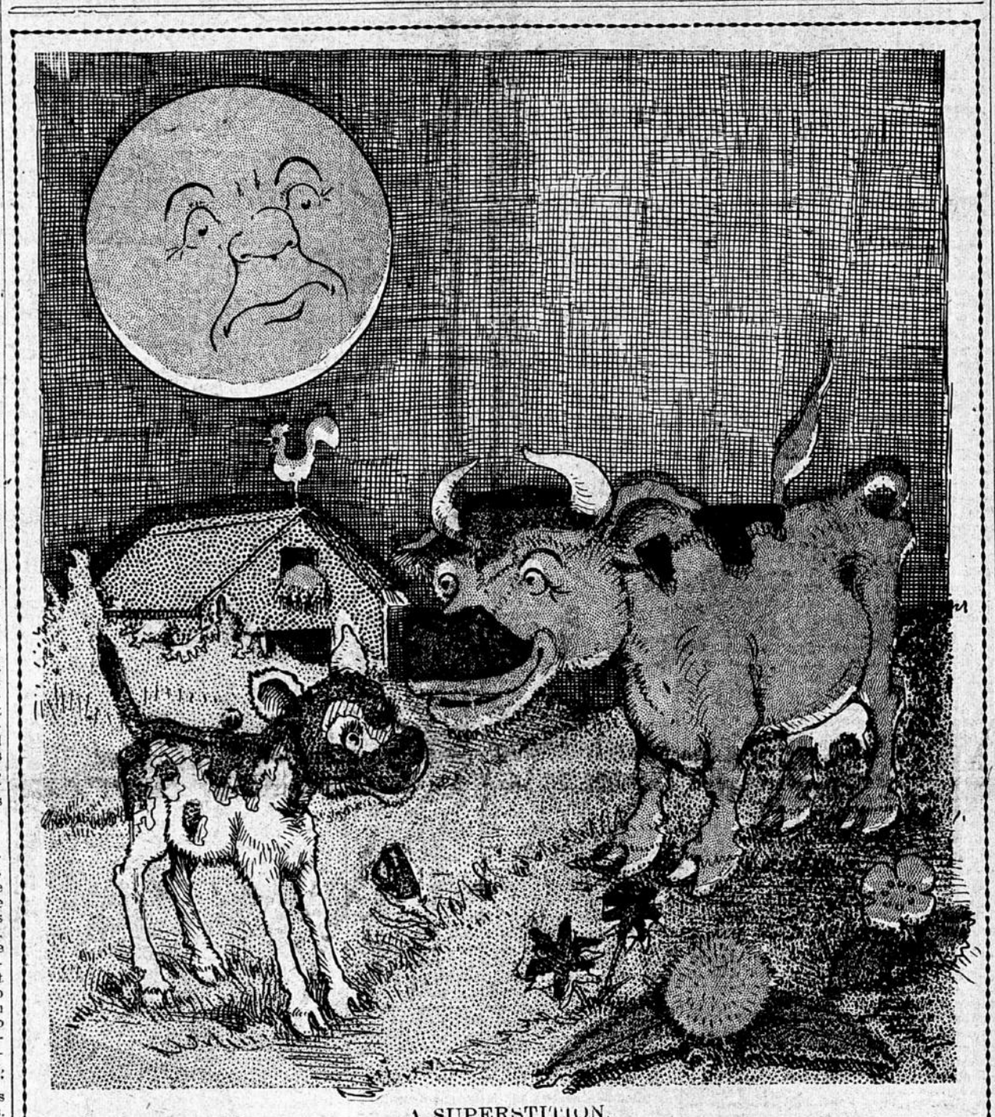
It was very much like a Ben Hur chariot race; the driver was bribed and pedestrians had to get out of the way as best they could. I would not have been surprised if we had been arrested; although I believed Dr. Talmage's magic name would, even then, let us loose again. But we made every point by the fraction of a minute; and both reached our engagements safely.

Throughout the whole of it he was calmly happy, seeming to enjoy the excitement as if he were a looker-on instead of an actor in it.

During the day's railroad ride the coach was continually lighted up with his genial sallies of wit and cheery anecdotes of former days, and night came all too soon.

Many other incidents could I give of personal contact with this great and majestic figure of the century, but must content myself with treasuring them in memory. Some day I hope to see him again, and talk them over.

THE LATE REV. DR. TALMAGE



A SUPERSTITION.

Mrs. Cow—No, my child; the moon is not made of green cheese—it's made of butter

Rub over the moon with a moist brush and see if the cow is right. Try it also on the cow, calf, pasture and barn.

FOR EXAMPLE.

Chicago Tribune.

"Brooks," said Rivers, "that's the second time I've heard you use the phrase 'aching void.' I wish you would tell be how a void can ache."

"Well," said Brooks, reflecting a moment, "not to speak of a hollow tooth, don't you sometimes have a headache?"

THE MERCANTILE MERGER; CAN IT BE A SUCCESS?

Jobbers in Other Lines Are Watching the Hardware Experiment With the Keenest Interest—Some Doubt Expressed as to the Success of Such a Combination Unless Sources of Supply Are Controlled.

THOUSANDS of traveling salesmen and wholesale and retail dealers in merchandise of all kinds are watching the progress of the proposed wholesale hardware combine with intense interest. It is the first merger attempted in the jobbing field. Opinions vary as to the feasibility of the combine in the wholesale trade. If the hardware merger is finally consummated, it will be the pioneer consolidation in American wholesaling. If it is a success it will work a revolution in the methods and expense of distributing merchandise. If the experiment is reasonably successful the wholesaler sees in it big possibilities in the way of economics; the retailer sees materially changed relations between himself and the jobber, and a large element of traveling men "see their finish."

Although the hardware merger has made much progress it is not yet an assured fact. There are 150 hardware jobbing concerns in the United States, and of these the merger promoters have 50 on the list. These concerns handle about 60 per cent of the hardware of the United States. The merger promoters hope to win the big house of Hibbard, Spencer, Bartlett & Co. of Chicago over to the merger idea, in which case the percentage of total output controlled by the combine houses will be materially increased. Some of the northwestern houses are vitally interested in this part of the program, as the northwestern hardware trade will be more peaceful with such a big house in the combine than on the outside.

In the meantime the work of fixing figures on which the various concerns will enter the combination is progressing. Nearly all of the companies have submitted estimates of stock on hand and statements of net earnings during the past five years. These items are to be used as a basis in apportioning the common and preferred stock. The arrival of representatives of the promoters who will go over the books and take inventory of the stock on hand is daily expected.

Why Other Jobbers Are Interested.

Even should the present plans of the hardware merger promoters fail, discussion of the utility of the combine in the jobbing trade will have been carried far beyond the old limits, which many wholesalers believe will work material results in the future. Should the merger plans be brought to a successful issue the jobbers in other lines would regard it as a big experiment well worth noting to the smallest detail. The northwest has several prominent jobbers in various lines who have been friends of the consolidation idea for years. At one time it was proposed to organize the big hardware houses in the west, including Chicago, in a big corporation which would have practically controlled 65 per cent of the trade west of Chicago. Consolidation has been successfully worked in a small way in the grocery trade. There is now a corporation owning a line of houses in Iowa and Minnesota the management of which is well pleased with results. A prominent St. Paul groceryman has advocated fewer houses as the best means of reducing operating expense for several years. The head of one of the northwestern houses was an early advocate of the proposed hardware merger.

Best Line to Merge.

While the opinions of jobbers as to the outcome of the merger plan in operating wholesale houses vary greatly, there is a unanimity of opinion that the promoter has selected in hardware the line promising the most success in demonstrating the feasibility of the scheme. Compared with other lines in which competition is the keenest, the hardware jobbing trade is in the hands of fewer concerns which makes it easier to obtain control of a majority of the output. The expense of operating a hardware jobbing house is greater than in most of the general merchandise lines which has an effect upon the number of houses and would tend to discourage an independent from beginning business as a competitor of the combine. The nature of the hardware business is such that a large stock must be carried in order to promptly supply the demands of the trade and this keeps down the number of houses started at smaller jobbing points. The hardware trade is done principally from the big centers.

Conditions in the eastern jobbing trade at the present time favor the building of a jobbing combine. Competition is so fierce that profits of many of the big houses in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia have been reduced to a minimum. On the other hand the western houses with a rapidly developing country at their back have been making money. It is natural that the eastern men should favor a big consolidation as a means of eliminating what they term ruinous competition. The western men looking to the future are willing to trim the operating expense or "cost of doing business."

Combine Must Be Conservative.

Profiting by the experience of some of the industrial mergers organized in the past few years, the jobbers who advocated combination says that the jobbing combine, no matter in what line, must be constructed on more conservative principles. In the 185 industrial mergers which have been organized in the past eight years, there has generally been an issue of preferred and common stock. The preferred represented the actual assets of the constituent companies and the common the good will and prospects. Economies in operation were confidently relied on to pay a good dividend on a liberal issue of preferrred. To make the common produce earnings and consequently give it a value a raise in price of the commodity manufactured was one of the possibilities counted upon. The attempt to raise prices in many cases has had a disastrous effect. Competition has been encouraged, and in combatting these unforeseen elements and conditions the dividend record of the preferred has been endangered. In several cases recently it has been necessary to tap the common stock reservoir and let a large quantity of water escape. The common stocks of many of the important industrials are dragging around a low figure, and that in flush times when consumption is at its best and demand continually in advance of the supply. The jobber who has critically surveyed the career of these various trusts takes the position that financing of this kind will bring a jobbing combine to grief. Economies in operation will pay a good dvidend on preferred and possibly on some "good will stock," which the public calls water. But unless the source of supply can be controlled, any jobbing combine that attempts to make its common advance in value by raising prices will be in trouble directly through the new competition which such a policy would encourage.

Mere Economy Not Neough.

In discussing the feasibility of the jobbing combine the heads of several of the big western houses dwell upon the necessity of controlling the manufacturer. Many of them insist that a merger founded upon "economy in operation" alone will not stand. In the case of a manufactured product it is a powerful element as the time and money required in equipping a plant to compete with the trust serves to keep competition down. An independent jobbing house can be erected in a comparatively short time, and with good traveling salesman in addition to the necessary capital, its future would be assured if it could get the goods. It is pointed out that while the promoters of the hardware merger talk "economy" entirely, and say that they want competition, yet their plan plainly points to the greatest possible influence with the manufacturer and if competition is to be kept at a point to enable them to do the necessary volume of business their influence with the manufacturer must be strong enough to keep ambitious independents in certain territory from getting their orders filled.

A leading Minneapolis dry goods wholesaler makes a comparison on this point between dry goods and hardware. He shows that every branch of hardware is practically controlled by a combination, and back of all is the steel trust furnishing a large quantity of the material. The hardware combine controlling a big majority of the wholesale hardware trade presents itself as a big customer to these various combinations. It desires to keep competition at a certain point and the various trusts are assured of its business on a fair basis without trouble or expense to them if they treat the big customer right. This means a getting together of the big fellows, both in the manufacturing and distributing of lines of hardware. Any pretentious independent would be forced to go to the combinations for his goods, and he would find the hardware business a discouraging proposition.

In the dry goods trade the manufacturing concerns in all lines are numerous. The independent could break into the pasture easily because he could secure the goods and his traveling man could get his share of the business.

The grocery trade is surrounded by peculiar conditions. On one side it buys goods of numerous trusts which practically control the staple lines. On the other side it sells goods against the hardest competition of any of the jobbing lines. In the central northwest territory covered by the twin city houses, there are about ten wholesale hardware houses and five dry goods houses. In the same territory there are about forty houses wholesaling groceries. Leading grocery jobbers are anxious to effect any saving possible in the cost of doing business. Two of the leading twin city grocers believe that a consolidation on conservative lines is practical. Others insist that the conditions surrounding the trade and the relation of the grocer to the manufacturer are such that it is impossible. This view is explained by the head of a big twin city house as follows:

"To make a national consolidation in the wholesale grocery trade a success, it would of course include only the big centers of distribution. Some arrangement would be necessary with the manufacturer in order to keep the competition of the cross roads jobber at a reasonable point. The nature of the grocery business is such that the cross roads jobber will always be with us. We can beat him on the big trade and in most features of the business but he will always be an element. In my relations with these various combines I have not found that the buyer of large quantities is given much of an advantage over the small buyer.

"The trusts have shown a desire to keep their goods in the hands of as many wholesalers as possible and consequently the man who buys fifty boxes is given about as good a price as the buyer who takes a carload. The trust reasons that to give the big jobber a lower price on a big order would discourage the small dealer, and in time make the big jobber too powerful an element in the distribution of their goods. There is no question but that the grocery trade offers an opportunity for economy in operating expenses through consolidation. Supposing two-thirds of the houses in Minneapolis and Duluth should enter a consolidation along with other big centers in the country. Say that we reduce our traveling forces to half the usual number. If the big combinations refuse to recognize us, other houses are given an opportunity to come in. They put out their traveling men, and you can be sure that every man will get business. The traveling men oftentimes gauge the business more than the house... The combine would simply lose in volume of business which is quite essential in the grocery trade. Then it must be remembered that many of the big grocery houses of the country are now competitors of the trusts. They manufacture all kinds of food products."

The Salesman a Factor.

The traveling men and their relation to the consolidation movement is discussed by the head of a twin city wholesale paper house as follows:

"It is my experience that the number of traveling men covering a territory is a big factor in the division of the business coming from that territory. The personal equation cuts a big figure in the jobbing trade. Organize a combine of paper jobbers and I will ask nothing better than to be on the outside with a force of good salesmen, if I can get the goods to sell. When it comes to selling goods you cannot judge any feature of the game by rule. There are hundreds of salesmen in the country to-day who are holding big trade against all comers and at better prices than their competitors. Suppose a paper combine should be in operation now and all of the paper houses in this territory with few exceptions were included. Granting that it could buy goods at less money than the independent, in spite of all that the independent would do a good business. The personality of the traveling man would do a great deal. Sentiment among retail dealers must not be forgotten. They are no friends of the combine or trust. The only way in which the combine could keep competition at a satisfactory point would be to deprive the jobbers of goods. That may be possible in some lines, but the prospects for it are poor in the paper trade. The jobbers in other lines will watch the progress of the first jobbing combine with interest. I believe that the assault which will be made on the idea by the entire body of traveling salesmen will make all sorts of trouble for it unless it is powerful enough to keep down competition by cutting off the supply of goods. A combine will save money in the cost of selling and in other directions, but much of this must be realized through reducing traveling forces. That, in my opinion, invites a reduction in the volume of business."

If the combination plan can be applied successfully to merchandise jobbing, the leading jobbers point out as a direct effect the reduced number of houses and people employed in the distribution of merchandise in the various jobbing centers. Consolidation means the loss of individuality of the various firms and this will operate in the direction of less competition among various centers, and slow development of the jobbing trade of various western cities which, under the present system, are assured of a bright future in wholesaling.

—W. E. Davis.

TRIPLETS 79 YEARS OF AGE

Probably the oldest triplets living. They are aunts of Mrs. H. E. Ladd of this city and members of a remarkable family, children of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Townsend, which included two pairs of twins. They are Mrs. Martha Hagar of Winter Hill, Somerville, Mass.; Mrs. Sarah Fossett and Mrs. Mary Fossett of North Union, Me.

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