Tales of the Road

Charles N. Crewdson

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and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team.

Dedicated to Alex C. Ritchey, Salesman.
the Author's Friend.

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CHAPTER I. THE SQUARE DEAL WINS.

Salesmanship is the business of the world; it is about all there is to the world of business. Enter the door of a successful wholesale or manufacturing house and you stand upon the threshold of an establishment represented by first−class salesmen. They are the steam —and a big part of the engine, too—that makes business move.

I saw in print, the other day, the statement that salesmanship is the “fourth profession.” It is not; it is the first. The salesman, when he starts out to “get there,” must turn more sharp corners, “duck” through more alleys and face more cold, stiff winds than any kind of worker I know. He must think quickly, yet use judgment; he must act quickly and still have on hand a rich store of patience; he must work hard, and often long. He must coax one minute and “stand pat” the next. He must persuade—persuade the man he approaches that he needs *his* goods and make him buy them—yes, *make* him. He is messenger boy, train dispatcher, department buyer, credit man, actor, lawyer and politician—all under one hat!

By “salesman” I do not mean the man who stands behind the counter and lets the customer who comes to him and wants to buy a necktie slip away because the spots on the silk are blue instead of green; nor do I mean the man who wraps up a collar, size 16, and calls “cash;” I mean the man who takes his grip or sample trunks and goes to hunt his customer—the traveling salesman. Certainly there are salesmen *behind* the counter, and he has much in common with the man on the road.

To the position of traveling salesman attach independence, dignity, opportunity, substantial reward. Many of the tribe do not appreciate this; those do so best who in time try the “professional life.” When they do they usually go back to the road happy to get there again. Yet were they permanently to adopt a profession—say the law—they would make better lawyers because they had been traveling men. Were many professional men to try the road, they would go back to their first occupation because forced to. The traveling man can tell you why! I bought, a few days ago, a plaything for my small boy. What do you suppose it was? A toy train. I wish him to get used to it—for when he grows up I am going to put him on the road hustling trunks.

My boy will have a better chance for success at this than at anything else. If he has the right sort of stuff in him he will soon lay the foundation for a life success; if he hasn't I'll soon find it out. As a traveling salesman he will succeed quickly or not at all. In the latter event, I'll set him to studying a profession. When he goes on the road he may save a great part of his salary, for the firm he will represent will pay his living expenses while traveling for them. He will also have many leisure hours, and even months, in which to study for a profession if he chooses; or, if he will, he may spend his “out of season” months in foreign travel or any phase of intellectual culture—and he will have the money *of his own earning* with which to do it. Three to six or eight months is as much time as most traveling men can profitably give to selling goods on the road; the rest is theirs to use as they please.

Every man who goes on the road does not succeed—not by any means. The road is no place for drones; there are a great many drops of the honey of commerce waiting in the apple blossoms along the road, but it takes the busy “worker” bee to get it. The capable salesman may achieve great success, not only on the road, but in any kind of activity. “The road” is a great training school. The chairman of the Transportation Committee in the Chicago city council, only a few years ago was a traveling man. He studied law daily and went into politics while he yet drew the largest salary of any man in his house. Marshall Field was once a traveling man; John W. Gates sold barbed wire before he became a steel king. These three men are merely types of successful traveling men.

Nineteen years ago, a boy of 15, I quit picking worms off of tobacco plants and began to work in a wholesale house, in St. Louis, at $5 per week—and I had an even start with nearly every man ever connected with the firm. The president of the firm today, now also a bank president and worth a million dollars, was formerly a traveling man; the old vice−president of the house, who is now the head of another firm in the same line, used to be a traveling man; the present vice−president and the president's son−in−law was a traveling man when I went with the firm; one of the directors, who went with the house since I did, is a traveling man. Another who traveled for this firm is today a vice−president of a large wholesale dry goods house; one more saved enough to go recently into the wholesale business for himself. Out of the lot six married daughters of wealthy parents, and thirty or more, who keep on traveling, earn by six months or less of road work, from $1200 to $6000 each year. One has

done, during his period of rest, what every one of his fellow salesmen had the chance to do—take a degree from a great university, obtain a license (which he cannot afford to use) to practice law, to learn to read, write and speak with ease two foreign languages and get a smattering of three others, and to travel over a large part of the world.

Of all the men in the office and stock departments of this firm only two of them have got beyond $25 a week; and both of them have been drudges. One has moved up from slave−bookkeeper to credit−man slave and partner. The other has become a buyer. And even he as well as being a stock man was a city salesman.

Just last night I met, on leaving the street car, an old school boy friend who told me that he was soon going to try his hand on the road selling bonds. He asked me if I could give him any pointers. I said: “Work and be square—never come down on a price; make the price right in the beginning.” “Oh, I don't know about that,” said he. I slapped him on the breast and answered: “I do!”

I would give every traveling man, every business man, *every man* this same advice. Say what you will, a square deal is the only thing to give your customer. You can do a little scaly work and win out at it for a while; but when you get in the stretch, unless you have played fair, the short horses will beat you under the wire.

The best customer on my order book came to me because I once had a chance to do a little crooked work, but didn't. I had a customer who had been a loyal one for many years. He would not even look at another salesman's goods—and you know that it is a whole lot of satisfaction to get into a town and walk into a door where you know you are “solid.” The man on the road who doesn't appreciate and care for a faithful customer is not much of a man, anyway.

My old customer, Logan, had a little trouble with his main clerk. The clerk, Fred, got it into his head that the business belonged to him, and he tried to run it. But Logan wouldn't stand for this sort of work and “called him down.” The clerk became “toppy” and Logan discharged him.

But, still, Fred had a fairly good standing in the town and interested an old bachelor, a banker, who had a nephew that he wanted to start in business. He furnished Fred and his nephew with $10,000 cash capital; the three formed a partnership to open a new store and “buck” Logan. Well, you know it is not a bad thing to “stand in” with the head clerk when you wish to do business in an establishment. So I had always treated Fred right and he liked me and had confidence in me. In fact, it's a poor rule to fail to treat all well. I believe that the “boys” on the road are the most tolerant, patient human beings on earth. To succeed at their business they must be patient and after a while it becomes a habit—and a good one, too.

You know how it goes! A merchant gets to handling a certain brand of goods which is no better than many others in the same line. He gets it into his head that he cannot do without that particular line. This is what enables a man on the road to get an established trade. The clerks in the store also get interested in some special brand because they have customers who come in and ask for that particular thing a few times. They do not stop to think that the man who comes in and asks for a Leopard brand hat or a Knock−'em−out shoe does not have any confidence in this special shoe or hat, but that he has confidence in the establishment where he buys it.

So, when I was in Logan's town to sell him his usual bill, his clerk hailed me from across the street and came over to where I stood. He told me that he had quit his old job and that he was going to put in a new stock. I, of course, had to tell him that I must stay with Logan, but that out of appreciation of his past kindness to me I would do the best I could to steer him right in my line of goods. I gave him a personal letter to another firm that I had been with before and who, I knew, would deal with him fairly.

Fred went in to market. When in the city he tried to buy some goods of my firm. He intended to take these same goods and sell them for a lower price than Logan had been getting, and thus cut hard into Logan's trade. But the big manufacturers, you know, are awake to all of those tricks and a first−class establishment will always protect its customers. My house told Fred that before they could sell to him they would have to get my sanction. They wired me about it, and I, of course, had to be square with my faithful old friend, Logan; I placed the matter before him. As I was near by, I wrote him, by special delivery, and put the case before him. He, for self−protection, wired my house that he would prefer that they would not sell his old clerk who was now going to become his competitor. In fact, he said he would not stand for it.

The very next season things came around so that Logan went out of business, and then I knew that I was “up against it” in his town—my old customer gone out of business; Fred not wanting, then, of course, to buy of me. But I took my medicine and consoled myself with the thought that a few grains of gold would pan out in the wash.

Up in a large town above Logan's I had a customer named Dave, who had moved out from Colorado. He was

well fixed, but he had not secured the right location. Say what you will, location has a whole lot to do with business. Of course, a poor man would not prosper in the busy streets of Cairo, but the best sort of a hustler would starve to death doing business on the Sahara. A big store in Dave's new town failed. He had a chance to buy out the, stock at 75 cents on the dollar. He wished to do so; but, although he was well−to−do, he didn't have the ready cash.

One night I called on Dave and he laid the case before me. He told me how sorry he was not to get hold of this "snap." I put my wits together quickly and I said to him: "Dave, I believe I can do you some good."

The next morning I went to see a banker, who was a brother−in−law of Logan's and who had made enough money, merchandising and out of wheat, down in Logan's old town, to move up to the city and go into the banking business. The banker knew all about the way that I had treated his brother−in−law, and I felt that because I had been square with Logan he would have confidence in anything I would say to him. I laid the case before the banker. I told him I knew Dave to be well fixed, to have good credit, to be a good rustler and strictly straight.

In a little while I brought Dave to meet the banker. The banker immediately, upon my recommendation, told him that he could have all the money he needed−$16,000. The banker also wired to the people who owned the stock—he was well acquainted with them—and told them he would vouch for Dave.

The deal went through all right and Dave now buys every cent's worth, that he uses in my line, from me. He is the best customer I have; I got him by *being square*.

A great mistake which some salesmen make when they first start on the road is to "load" their customers. The experienced man will not do this, for he soon learns that he will "lose out" by it. A merchant will not long continue to buy from a traveling man in whom he has no confidence. He, in great measure, depends on the judgment of the traveling man as to the styles and quantities he should buy. If the salesman sells him too much of anything it is only a matter of time when the merchant will buy from some other man. When a storekeeper buys goods he invests money; and his heart is not very far from his bank−book.

The time when the traveling man will ram all he can into an order is when the merchant splits his business in the salesman's line, buying the same kind of goods from two or more houses. Then the salesman sells as much as he can, that he may crowd the other man out. But even this is poor policy.

I once took on a new town. My predecessor had been getting only a share of his customer's trade; two others had divided the account with him. I made up my mind to have all of the account or none. The merchant went to my sample room and gave me an order for a bill of hats. He bought at random. When I asked him what sizes he wanted, he said: "Oh, run 'em regular." "Very well," said I, "but will it not be well to look through your stock and see just what sizes you need? Maybe you have quite a number of certain sizes on hand and it will be needless for you to get more of them. Let's go down to the store and look through your stock."

We went to his store. The first item on the order he had given me was one dozen black "Columbias." I found that he had five dozen already on hand. "Look here," said I, "don't you think I would better scratch that item off of the bill?" I drew my pencil through the "one dozen Columbias."

"Now let us go through your whole stock and see if there are not other items you have duplicated," I suggested. We worked together for four hours—until after midnight. It was the biggest mess of a stock I ever saw. When we got through I had cut down my order three−fourths.

"See," said I, showing the merchant my order−book and his stock list— which every merchant should have when he goes to buy goods—"you have enough of some kinds to last you three years. Others, because they have gone out of style, are worth nothing. All you can get out of them will be clear profit; throw them out and sell them for any price.

"Do you know what has been happening to you right along? Three men— and the one from my firm is just as guilty as the rest—have been loading you. Why, if I were a judge and they were brought before me, I'd sentence them to jail."

"And I guess I ought to be made to go along with them," broke in my friend, "for participating in the crime."

"That I will leave you to judge," said I, "but there is one thing for sure: You will not see me back here again for a year; it would be a crime for anyone to take an order from you during that time. And when I do come I want all of your business, or none; you haven't enough for three, or even for two. You can buy no more than you can sell to your customers, unless you go broke some day. Your interest and my interest are the same. In truth, I stand on the same side of the counter as you do. It is to my interest to treat you right. My firm is merely the one from

which you and I together select your goods. Ought I not to see that they give you the right things at the right prices? If I treat you right, and my firm does not, you will follow me to another; if I treat you wrong I'll lose both your confidence and my job."

That man today gives me all of his business; I got him by *being square*.

By being over−conscientious, however, a salesman sometimes will not let his customer buy enough. This is frequently to the disadvantage of the merchant. To sell goods a merchant must have goods; to have them he must buy them. The stingy man has no business in business. Many a man becomes a merchant and, because he is either too close−fisted or hasn't enough capital or credit with which to buy goods, is awakened, some fine morning, by the tapping on his front door of the Sheriff's hammer. A man may think that if he goes into business his friends will buy "any old thing, just because it's me"; but he will find out that when he goes to separate his friends from their coin he must give them the kind of goods they want. The successful merchant is the man who carries the stock.

One of my old friends, who was a leading hat salesman of St. Louis, once told me the following experience:

"Several years ago I was out in western Texas on a team trip. It was a flush year; cattle were high. I had been having a good time; you know how it goes—the more one sells the more he wants to sell and can sell. I heard of a big cattleman who was also running a cross−roads grocery store. He wanted to put in dry goods, shoes and hats. His store was only a few miles out of my way so I thought that I would drive over and see him.

"How I kicked myself when I drove up to his shanty, hardly larger, it seemed to me, than my straw−goods trunk! But, being there, I thought I would pick up a small bill anyway. I make it a rule never to overlook even a little order, for enough of them amount to as much as one big one. When I went in the old gentleman was tickled to see me and told me to open up—that he wanted a 'right smart' bill. I thought that meant about $75.

"I had to leave my trunks outside—the store was so small—so I brought in at first only a couple of stacks of samples, thinking that they would be enough. I pulled out a cheap hat and handed it to him.

"'That's a good one for the money,' said I, 'a dollar apiece.' I used to always show cheap goods first, but I have learned better.

"He looked at my sample in contempt and, pulling a fine Stetson hat off his head, said: 'Haven't you got some hats like this one?'

"'Yes, but they will cost you $84 a dozen,' I answered, at the same time handing him a fine beaver quality Stetson.

"'The more they cost the better they suit us cattlemen; we are not paupers, suh! How many come in a box?'

"'Two.'

"'Two?' said he. 'You must be talking about a pasteboard box; I mean a wooden box, a case.'

"'Three dozen come in a case, Colonel.'

"'Well, give me a case.'

"I had never sold a case of these fine goods in my life, so I said to him: 'That's lots more, Colonel, than I usually sell of that kind, and I don't want to overload you; hadn't we better make it a dozen?'

"'Dozen? Lor', no. You must think that there's nobody in this country, that they haven't any money, and that I haven't any money. Did you see that big bunch of cattle as you came in? They're all mine—mine, suh; and I don't owe the bank a cent on them, suh. No, suh, not a cent, suh. I want a case of these hats, suh—not a little bundle that you can carry under yo' arm.'

"I was afraid that I had made the old gentleman mad, and, knowing him by reputation to be worth several thousand dollars, I thought it best to let him have his way. I went through the two stacks with him and then brought in the rest of my samples. He bought a case of a kind right through—fine hats, medium hats and cheap hats for greasers; he bought blacks, browns and light colors. I was ashamed to figure up the bill before his face. But just as soon as I got out of sight I added up the items and it amounted to $2l00—the best bill I took on that trip.

"I sent the order in, but I thought that I would not have to call there again for a long time. The house shipped the bill, and the old gentleman discounted it.

"Next trip I was intending to give that point the go−by. I really felt that the old gentleman not only needed no more goods, but that he would shoot me if I called on him. But when I reached the town next to his, my customer there, who was a friend of the Colonel's, told me that the old gentleman had sent him word that he wished to buy

some more goods and for me to be sure to come to see him.

“When I came driving up to the Colonel's store the back end of it looked peculiar to me. He had got so many goods from me that he had been obliged to take the wooden cases they were shipped in and make out of these boxes an addition to his store. Lumber was scarce in that country. The Colonel came out and shook hands with me before I was out of my wagon. I was never greeted more warmly in my life.

“'Look heah,' he began, 'I owe you an apology, suh; and I want to make it to you befo' you pass my threshol', suh. When you were heah befo' I fear that I allowed my indignation to arise. I am sorry of it, suh, sorry! Give me yo' hand and tell me that you will pahdon me. I can't look you square in the face until you do.'

“'Why, Colonel, that's all right,' said I, 'I didn't want to abuse your confidence, but I fear that I myself was impertinent in trying to show you that I knew more about your business than you did. I want to beg your pardon.'

“'No pahdon to grant, suh; and I want you to accept my apology. The truth is the cowboys in this country have been deviling me to death, nearly—ever since I started this sto'—to get them some good hats— good ones, suh. They told me that they couldn't get a decent hat in this whole country. I promised them that I would buy some of the best I could find. When yo's came some of the boys saw the wagon bound for my store, ten miles out of town. They fo'med a sort of a procession, suh, and marched in with the team. Every one of these boys bought one of those finest hats you sold me. They spread the news that I had a big stock and a fine stock, all over this country; and, do you know, people have come two hundred miles to buy hats of me? Some of my friends laughed at me, they say, because I bought so many that I had to use the cases they came in to make an addition to my sto'. But the more they laughed, suh, the more necessary they made the addition. If you can only get people to talking about you, you will thrive. Believe me in this, suh: If they say something good about you, that is good; if they say something bad about you, that is better—it spreads faster. Those fool merchants did not know, suh, that they were helping my business every time that they told about how many hats I had bought, until one day a fellow, when they were laughing about me, said: “Well, if that's the case I'll buy my hat from him; I like, anyway, to patronize the man who carries a good stock.” Now you just come back and see how empty my addition is.'

“I went back into my addition and found that the Colonel's hats were nearly all gone. He had actually sold—and out of his little shanty— more of my goods than any other customer I had. When I started to have my trunks unloaded the Colonel said to me: 'Now just hol' on there; that's entirely unnecessary. The last ones sold so well, you just duplicate my last bill, except that you leave out the poah hats. Come, let's go up to my house and have a julep and rest a while.'”

Although a man's friends will not buy from him if he does not carry the goods, he will yet get their patronage over the other fellow if he has the right stock. Here's where a man's personality and adaptability are his stock in trade when he is on the road; and the good salesman gets the business over his competitor's head just by being able to turn the mood of the merchant he meets. The more moods he can turn, the larger his salary.

One of my musician road friends once told me how he sold a bill to a well−known old crank, now dead, in the state of Montana.

“When I used to work at the bench, years ago,” said he, as we sat in the smoker, “evenings when I was free, for relaxation, I studied music. Our shop boys organized a brass band. I played the trombone, and learned to do so fairly well. I never thought then that my music would fatten my pocket−book; but since I have been on the road it has served me a good turn more than once—it has sold me many a bill.

“You've heard of the 'Wild Irishman of Chinook,' haven't you?”

“Old Larry, the crank?” said I.

“Yes, old Larry, the great.”

[Illustration: “Larry let business drop entirely and danced a jig.”]

“Well, sir, the first evening I ever went into Larry's store, I hadn't been in a minute until he said to me: 'Oi'm all full up; Oi've got plinty of it, I doon't give a dom pwhat ye're silling.'

“I paid no attention to him, as I had heard of him; instead of going out I bought a cigar and sat down by the stove. Although a man may not wish to buy anything from you, you know, he is always willing to sell you something, even if it is only a cigar. I've caught many a merchant's ear by buying something of him. My specialty is bone collar buttons—they come cheap. I'll bet that I bought a peck of them the first time I made a trip through this country.

“I had not been sitting by the stove long until I noticed, in a show case, a trombone. I asked Larry to please let

me see it. 'Oi'll lit ye say the insthrumint,' said he, 'but pwhat's the good of it? Ye can't play the thromboon, can ye? Oi'm the only mon in this berg that can bloo that hairn. Oi'm a mimber of the bhrass band.'

"I took the horn and, as I ran the scale a few times, Larry's eyes began to dance. He wouldn't wait on the customer who came in. The instrument was a good one. I made 'Pratties and fishes are very foine dishes for Saint Pathrick in the mairnin" fairly ring. A big crowd came in. Larry let business drop entirely and danced a jig. He kept me playing for an hour, always something 'by special rayquist'—'Molly Dairlint,' 'Moggie Moorphy's Hoom' and everything he could think of. Finally he asked me for 'Hairts Booed Doon.'

"As I played 'The Heart Bowed Down,' tears came to the old Irishman's eyes. When I saw these, I played yet better; this piece was one of my own favorites. I felt a little peculiar myself. This air had made a bond between us. When I finished, the old man said to me: 'Thank ye, thank ye, sor, with all my hairt! That's enoof. Let me put the hairn away. Go hoom now. But coom aroond in the mairnin' and Oi'll boy a bill of ye; Oi doon't give a dom pwhat ye're silling. If Oi've got your loine in my sthore Oi'll boy a bill; if I haven't, Oi'll boy a bill innyway and stairt a new depairtmint. Good noight, give me yer hand, sor.'

"Not only did Larry give me a good order, but he went to two more merchants in the town and made them buy from me. He bought every dollar's worth of his goods in my line from me as long as he lived."

CHAPTER II. CLERKS, CRANKS AND TOUCHES.

Many a bill of goods is sold on the road through the influence of the clerk. The traveling man who overlooks this point overlooks a strong one. The clerk is the one who gets next to the goods. He checks them off when they come in, keeps the dust off of them every day, sells them to the people and often he does the selecting of the goods in the first place. A merchant usually buys what pleases the clerks in order to get them interested. In this way he puts a sort of responsibility upon them. If the business man neglects his clerks, they neglect his business; if the traveling man ignores the clerks, they ignore the traveling man.

But in this matter the salesman must go just so far and no farther, for the moment that the merchant begins to think the traveling man is influencing the clerks unduly, down comes the hatchet! A hat man once, as we rode together on the train, told me this incident:

“I once sold a small bill of hats to a large merchant down in California,” said he. “The next season when I came around I saw that my goods were on the floor−shelf. I didn't like this. If you want to get your goods sold, get them where they are easy to reach. Clerks, and merchants too, usually follow the line of least resistance; they sell that which they come to first. If a man asks me where he ought to put his case for hats to make them move, I tell him, 'up front.'

“From the base shelf I dug up a box of my goods, knocked the dust off the lid, took out a hat, began to crease it. One of the clerks came up. He was very friendly. They usually are. They like to brush up against the traveling man, for it is the ambition of nineteen clerks out of every twenty to get on the road.

“My young friend, seeing the hat in my hand, said, 'Gee, that's a beaut. I didn't know we had a swell thing like that in the house. I wish I'd got one like that instead of this old bonnet.'

“With this he showed me a new stiff hat. I scarcely glanced at it before I cracked the crown out of it over my heel, handed him the hat I had taken out of the box, threw three dollars on the counter and said, 'Well, we'll swap. Take this one.'

“'Guess I will, all right, all right!' he exclaimed.

“Another one of the boys who saw this incident came up with his old hat and asked, laughing, 'Maybe you want to swap with me?'

“Crack went another hat; down I threw another three dollars. Before I got through, eight clerks had new hats, and I had thrown away twenty−four dollars.

“Thrown away? No, sir. I'll give that much, every day of the week, to get the attention of a large dealer. Twenty−four dollars are made in a minute and a half by a traveling man when he gets to doing business with a first−class merchant.

“The proprietor, Hobson, was not then in. When I dropped in that afternoon, I asked him if he would see my samples.

“'No, sir, I will not,' he spoke up quickly. 'To be plain with you, I do not like the way in which you are trying to influence my clerks.'

“There was the critical—the 'psychological'—moment. Weakness would have put an end to me. But this was the moment I wanted. In fact, I have at times deliberately made men mad just to get their attention.

“'Hobson,' I flashed back, 'You can do just as you please about looking at my goods. But I'll tell you one thing: I have no apology to offer in regard to your clerks. You bought my goods and buried them. I know they are good, and I want you to find it out. I have put them on the heads of your men because I am not ashamed to have them wear them before your face. You can now see how stylish they are. In six months you will learn how well they wear. I would feel like a sneak had I stealthily slipped a twenty dollar gold piece into the hand of your hat man and told him to push my goods. But I haven't done this. In fact I gave a hat to nearly every clerk you have except your hat man. He was away. Even your delivery boy has one. You owe me an apology, sir; and I demand it, and demand it right now! I've always treated you as a gentleman, sir; and you shall treat me as such.' Then, softening down, I continued: 'I can readily see how, at first glance, you were offended at me; but just think a minute, and I believe you'll tell me you were hasty.'

“'Yes, I was,' he answered quietly. 'Got your stuff open? I'll go right down with you.' After Hobson had, in a

few minutes, given me a nice order, he said to me: 'Well, do you know, I like your pluck.'

“It sometimes happens that a traveling man meets with a surly clerk, a conceited clerk, or a bribed clerk who has become buyer,” continued my friend. “Then the thing to do is to go straight to the head of the establishment. The man I like to do business with is the man whose money pays for my goods. He is not pulled out of line by guy ropes. It is well to stand in with the clerks, but it is better to be on the right side of the boss. When it gets down to driving nails, he is the one to hammer on the hardest.

“I once took on the territory of a man who had quit the road. About this same time one of his best customers had, to some extent, retired from business activity and put on a new buyer in my department. Now, this is a risky thing, you know, for a merchant to do unless the buyer gets an interest in the business and becomes, in truth, a merchant himself. It usually means the promotion of a clerk who gets a swelled head. The new buyer generally feels that he must do something to show his ability and one of the ways he does this is by switching lines.

“During the illness of my predecessor, who soon after quit the road, another man made for him a part of his old trip. In one of the towns he made he struck the new buyer and, of course, got turned down. Had I been there, I would have received the same sort of treatment.

“My immediate predecessor, who was turned down, posted me; so when I went to the town, I knew just what to do—go direct to the proprietor. I knew that my goods were right; all I needed was unprejudiced attention. Prejudice anyway buys most of the goods sold; merit is a minor partner. Were merchandise sold strictly on merit, two−thirds of the wholesale houses and factories would soon lock up; and the other third would triple their business.

“When I entered the store, I went straight to the proprietor and told him without introducing myself (a merchant does not care what your name is) what my line of business was. It was Saturday afternoon. I would rather go out making business on Saturday than any other day because the merchant is doing business and is in a good humor, and you can get right at the point. Of course, you must catch him when he is not, for the moment, busy.

“'Can't do anything for you, sir, I fear,' said he. 'Hereafter we are going to buy that line direct from the factories.'

“I saw that the proprietor himself was prejudiced, and that the one thing to do was to come straight back at him. 'Where do you suppose my hats come from?' said I. 'My factory is the leading one in New Jersey.' I was from Chicago although my goods, in truth, were made in Orange Valley.

“'Will you be here Monday?' he asked. This meant that he wanted to look at my samples. The iron was hot; then was the time to strike.

“'Sorry, but I cannot,' I answered. 'But I'll tell you what I'll do. My line is a specialty line—only fine goods—and I'll bring in a small bunch of samples tonight about the time you close up.' Merchants like to deal with a man who is strictly business when they both get to doing business. Then is the time to put friendship and joking on the shelf.

“That night at ten o'clock I was back at the store with a bundle under my arm. The man who is too proud to carry a bundle once in a while would better never start on the road. The proprietor whispered to the hat buyer—I overheard the words—'Large Eastern factory'—and together they began to look at my samples. The new buyer went to the shelves and got out some of the goods which had come from my house to compare with my samples,—which were just the same quality. But, after fingering both, he said right out to the proprietor: 'There's no comparison. I've told you all along that the factory was the place to buy.'

“I booked my order—it was a fat one, too—solid case lots.

“'Shall I ship these from Orange Valley or Chicago?' I asked.

“'Why do you ask that?' asked the proprietor.

“'Because you have bought a bill from a firm you have dealt with for twenty years, Blank and Company of Chicago, that I represent, and I do not want one who has favored me to pay any extra freight. You will pardon me, I'm sure, for not telling you the whole truth until now; but this was the only way in which I could overcome your prejudice.'”

“That's one on me,” said the merchant. “Come—boys, you are in on this too—I'll buy the smokes.”

Many traveling men make mistakes by steering shy of cranks. The so− called crank is the easiest man to approach, if only you go at him right.

Once I sat at dinner with two other traveling men who were strangers to me—as strange as one traveling man ever is to another. This is not, however, very “strange,” for the cosmopolitan life of the road breeds a good fellowship and a sort of secret society fraternity among all knights of the grip. My territory being new, I made inquiry regarding the merchants of a certain town to which I intended to go.

“Don't go there,” spoke up one of my table companions. “There's no one there who's any good except old man Duke and he's the biggest crank on earth. He discounts his bills,—but Lord, it's a job to get near him.”

Some men on the road are vulgar; but will not this comment apply to some few of any class of men?

“My friend,” said companion number two, looking straight at the man who had just made the above remarks, “I've been on the road these many years and, if my observation counts for anything, those we meet are, to a great extent, but reflections of ourselves. True, many call Mr. Duke peculiar, but I have always got along with him without any trouble. I consider him a gentleman.”

I went to the “old crank's” town. As I rode on the train, louder than the clacking of the car wheels, I heard myself saying over and over again: “*Those we meet are, to a great extent, but reflections of ourselves.*”

When I went into the old gentleman's store, he was up front in his office at work on his books. I merely said, “Good morning, sir,” and went back and sat down by the stove. It's never a good thing to interrupt a merchant when he's busy. He, and he alone, knows what is most important for him to do. Maybe he has an urgent bill or sight draft to meet; maybe he has a rush order to get off in the next mail; maybe he is figuring up his profit or his loss on some transaction. Then is not the time to state your business if you wish to make your point. The traveling man must not forget that the merchant's store is a place of business; that he is on the lookout for good things and just as anxious to buy good goods advantageously as the salesman is to sell them; and that he will generally lend an ear, for a moment at least,—if properly approached—to any business proposition.

After a while, the old gentleman came back to the stove and, as he approached, politely said to me, “Is there something I can do for you, suh?”

I caught his southern accent and in a moment was on my guard. I arose and, taking off my hat—for he was an old gentleman—replied: “That remains with you, sir,” and I briefly stated my business, saying finally, “As this is my first time in your town and as my house is perhaps new to you, possibly, if you can find the time to do so, you may wish to see what I have.” Recalling that one of my table companions had said he considered him a gentleman I was especially careful to be polite to the merchant. And politeness is a jewel that every traveling man should wear in his cravat.

“I shall see you at one thirty, suh. Will you excuse me now?” With this the old gentleman returned to his office. I immediately left the store. The important thing to get a merchant to do is to consent to look at your goods. When you can get him to do this, keep out of his way until he is ready to fulfil his engagement. Then, when you have done your business, pack your goods and leave town. What the merchant wants chiefly with the traveling man is to *do business* with him. True, much visiting and many odd turns are sometimes necessary to get the merchant to the point of “looking,” but when you get him there, leave him until he is ready to “look.” Friendships, for sure, will develop, but don't force them.

At one twenty−nine that afternoon I started for the “old crank's” store. It was just across the street from my sample room. I met him in the middle of the street. He was a crank about keeping his engagements promptly. I respect a man who does this. The old gentleman looked carefully, but not tediously, at my goods, never questioning a price. In a little while, he said: “I shall do some business with you, suh; your goods suit me.”

I never sold an easier bill in my life and never met a more pleasant gentleman. Our business finished, he offered me a cigar and asked that he might sit and smoke while I packed my samples. Yes, offered me a cigar. And I took it. It was lots better than offering him one. He enjoyed giving me one more than he would have enjoyed smoking one of mine. In fact, it flatters any man more to accept a favor from him than to do one for him. Many traveling men spend two dollars a day on cigars which they give away. They are not only throwing away money but also customers sometimes. The way for the salesman on the road to handle the man he wants to sell goods to in order to get his regard is to treat him as he does the man of whom he expects no favors. When you give a thing to a man he generally asks in his own mind, “What for?”

Before I left the town of the “old crank” I met with another of his peculiarities. I was out of money. I asked him if he would cash a sight draft for me on my firm for a hundred dollars.

“No, suh,” said he. “I will not. I was once swindled that way and I now make it a rule never to do that.”

Needles stuck in me all over.

"But," continued the old gentleman, "I shall gladly lend you a hundred dollars or any amount you wish."

For the many years I went to the town of the "old crank," our relationship was most cordial. I believe we became friends. More than once did he drop business and go out fishing with me. Since the first day we met I have often recalled the words of my table companion: "Those we meet are, to a great extent, but reflections of ourselves."

Recalling the predicament I was in for a moment in the town of the "old crank," reminds me of an experience I once had. As a rule, I haven't much use for the man on the road who borrows money. If he hasn't a good enough stand−in with his firm to draw on the house or else to have the firm keep him a hundred or two ahead in checks, put him down as no good. The man who is habitually broke on the road is generally the man who thinks he has the "gentle finger," and that he can play in better luck than the fellow who rolls the little ivory ball around a roulette wheel. There are not many of this kind, though; they don't last long. It's mostly the new man or the son of the boss who thinks he can pay room rent for tin horns.

Even the best of us, though, get shy at least once in a life time, and have to call on some one for chips. I've done this a few times myself. I never refused one of the boys on the road a favor in all my life. Many a time I've dug up a bill and helped out some chap who was broke and I knew, at the time, that as far as getting back the money went, I might just as well chuck it in the sewer. Few of the boys will borrow, but all of them are ever ready to lend.

The one time I borrowed was in Spokane. When I went down to the depot I learned that I could buy a baggage prepaid permit and save about fifty dollars. I did not know until I reached the station that I could do this in Spokane. Down east they haven't got on well to this system. You can prepay your excess baggage all the way from a coast point clear back to Chicago and have the right to drop your trunks off anywhere you will along the route. This makes a great saving. Well, when I went to check in I saw that I was short about four dollars. I did not have time to run back to my customer's up town or to the hotel and cash a draft. I looked to see if there was somebody around that I knew. Not a familiar face. I had to do one of three things: Lose a day, give up by slow degrees over fifty dollars to the Railroad Company, or strike somebody for four.

Right here next to me at the baggage counter stood a tall, good natured fellow—I shall always remember his sandy whiskers and pair of generous blue eyes. He was checking his baggage to Walla Walla.

"Going right through to Walla Walla?" said I.

"Yes," he said, "can I do anything for you?"

"Well, since you have mentioned it, you can," I answered.

I introduced myself, told my new friend—Mason was his name, Billie Mason—how I was fixed and that I would give him a note to my customer, McPherson, at Walla Walla, requesting him to pay back the money.

I gave Mason the order, written with a lead pencil on the back of an envelope, and he gave me the four dollars.

I got down to Walla Walla in a few days. When I went in to see McPherson the first thing I said to him, handing him four dollars, was: "Mac, I want to pay you back that four."

"What four?" said McPherson.

"What four?" said I. "Your memory must be short. Why, that four I gave a traveling man, named Mason, an order on you for!"

McPherson looked blank; but we happened to be standing near the cashier's desk, and the matter was soon cleared up.

The cashier, who was a new man in the store, spoke up and said: "Yes, last week a fellow was in here with an order on you for four dollars, but it was written with a lead pencil on the back of an envelope. I thought it was no good. I didn't want to be out the four, so I refused to pay it."

"The deuce you did," said my friend Mac, "Why, I've known this man (referring to me) and bought goods of him for ten years."

The thing happened this way: On the very day that Mason presented my order both McPherson himself and the clerk in my department were out of town. When the new cashier told Mason that he did not know me, Mason simply thought he was "done" for four, and walked out thanking himself that the amount was not more.

But it so happened that Mason himself that night told this joke on himself to a friend of mine.

My friend laughed "fit to kill" and finally said to Mason: "Why that fellow's good for four hundred;" and he

gave Mason what I had failed to give him—my address.

I had also failed to take Mason's address. After he made me the loan in Spokane we sat on the train together chatting. I became well acquainted with him, and with a friend of his named Dickey, who was along with us. Yet I did not ask Mason his business, even; for, as you know, it's only the fresh, new man who wants to know what every man he meets is selling.

After McPherson's new cashier had told me that he had not paid my order, I inquired of every man I met about Mason, but could get no clew on him. He was in a specialty jewelry business and made only a few large towns in my territory. Every time I boarded a train I would look all through it for those sandy whiskers. It was lucky that he wore that color; it made the search easy. I even looked for him after midnight—not only going through the day coaches, but asking the Pullman porters if such a man was aboard. I woke up more than one red− whiskered man out of his slumbers and asked him: “Is your name Mason?” One of them wanted to lick me for bothering him, but he laughed so loudly when, in apologizing, I told him the reason for my search that he woke up the whole car. I never found him this way, and not having his address, I could only wait.

I had just about given up all hopes of getting a line on my confiding friend when, several weeks after a letter bearing the pen marks of many forwardings, caught me. I've got that letter; it reads this way:

“Walla Walla, Dec. 6th.

“My Dear Sir:

“I called on Mr. McPherson today and unfortunately found him out of the city. None of his clerks seemed to know you when I presented your request for an advance. They all began to look askance at me as if I were a suspicious character. I ought to have put on my white necktie and clerical look before going in, but unluckily I wore only my common, everyday, drummer appearance.

“I got your address from a fellow wayfarer here just minute ago. My train goes soon. I am writing you care of your house as I'm a little leery of sending it care of your friend McPherson.

“Your order for the four now reposes in the inside pocket of my vest amongst my firm's cash and will stand as an I. O. U. against me until I hear from you. Even as I write, my friend Dickey, who sits at my left, keeps singing into my ear:

“'If I should die tonight and you should come to my cold corpse and say:

“'“Here, Bill, I've brought you back that four,”

“'“I'd rise up in my white cravat and say: “What's that?” And then fall dead once more.'

“Beseechingly yours,

“W. L. Mason, “Denver, Box —.”

Although I sent Mason a check, it seemed that I was ever doomed to be in error with him. I wrote him insisting that he wear a new hat on me and asked him to send me his size.

He wrote back that he was satisfied to get the four dollars; but, since I pressed the matter, his size was seven and one−fourth.

I wrote my hatter to express a clear beaver to Mason. But somehow he got the size wrong, for Mason wrote back:

“Dear Brother: Everything that I have to do with you seems at first all wrong, but finally wiggles out all right. For example, while I stated that my size was seven and one−fourth your hatter sent a seven and one−half—two sizes too big under ordinary circumstances. But I was so tickled to get the unexpected four and a new lid besides that my head swelled and my bonnet fit me to a T.”

CHAPTER III. SOCIAL ARTS AS SALESMEN'S ASSETS.

Salesmanship has already been defined as the art of overcoming obstacles, of turning defeat into victory by the use of tact and patience. Courtesy must become constitutional with the drummer and diplomacy must become second nature to him. All this may have a very commercial and politic ring, but its logic is beyond question. It would be a decided mistake, however, to conclude that the business life of the skilful salesman is ruled only by selfish, sordid or politic motives.

In the early nineties, I was going through Western Kansas; it was the year of the drought and the panic. Just as the conductor called “All aboard” at a little station where we had stopped for water, up drove one of the boys. His pair of bronchos fairly dripped with sweat; their sides heaved like bellows—they had just come in from a long, hard drive. As the train started the commercial tourist slung his grips before him and jumped on. He shook a cloud of dust out of his linen coat, brushed dust off his shoes, fingered dust out of his hair, and washed dust off his face. He was the most dust−begrimed mortal I ever saw. His ablutions made, he sat down in a double seat with me and offered me a cigar.

“Close call,” said I.

“Yes, you bet—sixteen miles in an hour and thirty−five minutes. That was the last time I'll ever make that drive.”

“Customer quit you?”

“He hasn't exactly quit me, he has quit his town. All there ever has been in his town was a post office and a store, all in one building; and he lived in the back end of that. It has never paid me to go to see him, but he was one of those loyal customers who gave me all he could and gave it without kicking. He gave me the glad hand—and that, you know, goes a long ways—and for six years I've been going to see him twice a year, more to accommodate him than for profit. The boys all do lots of this work—more than merchants give them credit for. His wife was a fine little woman. Whenever my advance card came—she attended to the post office—she would always put a couple of chickens in a separate coop and fatten them on breakfast food until I arrived. Her dinner was worth driving sixteen miles for if I didn't sell a sou.

“But it is all off now. The man was always having a streak of hard luck—grasshoppers, hail, hot winds, election year or something, and he has finally pulled stakes. When I reached there this time it was the lonesomest place I ever saw, no more store and post office, no more nice little wife and fried chicken—not even a dog or hitching post. My friend had gone away and left no reminder of himself save a notice he had lettered with a marking brush on his front door. Just as a sort of a keepsake in memory of my old friend I took a copy. Here it goes:

“'A thousand feet to water!
A thousand miles to wood!
I've quit this blasted country
Quit her! Yes, for good.
The 'hoppers came abuzzin'
But I shooed them all away,
Next blew the hot winds furious;
Still, I had the grit to stay.
There's always something hap'ning;
So, while I've got the pluck—
Think I'll strike another country
And see how runs my luck.
God bless you, boys, I love you.
The drummer is my friend.
When I open up my doors again,
Bet your life, for you I'll send.'

“Wouldn't that cork you? Say, let's get up a game of whist.” With this my friend took a fresh cigar from me,

and, whistling, sauntered down the aisle hunting partners for the game. The long drive, the dust and the loss of a bill no longer disturbed him.

The man who grieves would better stay off the road. The traveling man must digest disappointments as he does a plate of blue points, for he swallows them about as often. One of the severest disappointments for a road man is to have the pins for a bill all set and then have some other man get the ball first and knock them down.

A clothing salesman told me this story:

“I have been chasing trunks for a long time but last season I got into the worst scrape of all my life on the road. I was a little pushed for time, so I wrote one of my irregular country customers that I would not be able to go to his town, but that I would pay his expenses if he would come in and meet me at Spokane.

“When he showed up he brought along his wife; and his wife rolled a young baby into my sample room. It was a pretty little kid, and struck me as being the best natured little chap I had ever seen. Of course, you know that to jolly up my customer a little I had to get on the good side of the wife, and the best way to do this was to play with the baby. After I had danced the little fellow around for a while I put him back into the buggy and supposed that I was going to get down to business. But the father said he thought he would be in town for a week or so and that he thought he would go out and find a boarding house.

“As we were talking, a friend of mine dropped in. He directed my customer to a boarding house, and then, just for fun, said: 'Why don't you leave the baby here with us while you're making arrangements. Mr. Percy has lots of children at home, and he knows how to take care of them all right.' Imagine how I felt when my country friends fell in with the shoe man's suggestion!

“Both of us got along first rate with the baby for a while. I really enjoyed it until my friend left me to go down the street, and a customer I was expecting came in. I thought the baby would get along all right by himself, and so I started to show customer No. 2 my line of goods. But the little chap had been spoiled by too much of my coddling and wouldn't stand for being left alone. At first he gave a little whimper. I rolled him for a minute or two with one hand and ran the other over a line of cheviots and told my customer how good they were; but the very minute I let go of the buggy, out broke the kid again. I repeated this performance two or three times, but whenever I let go the buggy handle the baby yelled. In a few minutes he was going it good and strong, and I had to take him out and bounce him up and down. Now, you can imagine just how hard it is to pacify a baby and sell a bill of clothing. Try it if you don't. I soon began to walk the floor to keep the kid from howling, and presently I decided I would rather keep that child quiet than sell a bill of goods. Finally, customer number two went out, saying he would see me the next morning; and there I was left all alone with the baby again.

[Illustration: “Whenever I let go the buggy handle the baby yelled"]

“I tried to ring a bell and get a chambermaid to take care of him, but the bell was broken. Then I began to sing all the songs I knew and kept it up until I nearly wore out my throat. It seemed as if the baby's mother never would come back, but I had the happy satisfaction of knowing, though, that the baby's mother and father would certainly have to come back and get the little fellow, and I felt sure of getting a good bill of goods.

“Well, what do you think happened? After two hours the mother came back and got the baby and I never saw her husband again! A competitor of mine had 'swiped' him as he came in the hotel office and sold him his bill of goods.”

Although my friend Percy who rolled the baby carriage back and forth lost out by this operation, I would advise my friends on the road to roll every baby buggy—belonging to a possible customer—that they have a chance to get their hands on. When the merchant gives the traveling man an opportunity to do him some sort of a favor outside of straight business dealing, he then gives the drummer the best possible chance to place him under obligations which will surely be repaid sometime. But don't go too far.

Down in Texas in one of the larger towns, just after the Kishinef horror, the Hebrew clothing merchants held a charity ball. If you were to eliminate the Hebrew from the clothing business the ranks of dealers in men's wearing apparel would be devastated. One of my friends in the clothing business told me how he and a furnishing goods friend of his made hay at that charity ball:

“The day that I struck town, one of my customers said to me, 'We want you to go to the show tomorrow night and open the ball with a few remarks. Will you?'

“Just for fun I said, 'To be sure I will, Ike.' I did not think I would be taken in earnest, but the next day I received a program, and right at the head of it was my name down for the opening speech. Well, I was up against

it and I had to make good. You may take my word for it that I felt a little nervous that night when I came to the big hall and saw it full of people waiting for the opening address. I needed to have both sand on the bottoms of my shoes and sand in my upper story to keep from slipping down on the waxed floor! But, as I was in for it, I marched bravely up and sat down for a few minutes in the big chair.

“Then the first thing I knew I was introduced. Now I was really in sympathy with the purpose of this gathering and I felt, sincerely, the atrocity of the Kishinef massacre. Consequently, I was able to speak from the heart in telling my audience how every human being, without regard to race, was touched by such an outrage. Had I been running for Congress there, I would have received every vote in the house. The women sent special requests by their husbands, asking the honor of a dance with me.

“Remember that the traveling man must not overlook the wife of his customer. Generally a man's nearest and truest friend is his wife. The business man feels that she is his best counselor. If you can get the good will of the 'women folks' of your customer's household you may be sure you will be solid with him for keeps.

“But I must not overlook my furnishing goods friend. He had been trained for an opera singer and would have made a success of it had he kept up with that profession. His business, however, prospered so well that he could never go and look the prompter in the face. He had a rich, full, deep voice which, when he sang the Holy City, made the chandeliers fairly hum. There is something in the melodious human voice, anyway, that goes away down deep into the heart. My friend won everybody there with a song. He with his music and I with my speech had done a courtesy to those merchants which they and their wives appreciated. You know you can feel it, somehow, when you are in true accord with those you meet.

“We really did not think anything about the business side that night. I forgot it altogether until, upon leaving the hall, my friend Ike said to me: 'Tonight we dance, tomorrow we sell clot'ing again.' Both of us did a good business in that town on the strength of the charity ball, and we have held our friends there as solid customers. I say 'solid customers' but actually there is no such thing as a 'solid customer.' The very best friend you have will slip away from you sometime, break out your corral, and you must mount your broncho, chase him down and rope him in again.”

A mighty true saying, that! It is a great disappointment to call upon a customer with whom you have been doing business for a long time and find that he has already bought. Ofttimes this happens, however, because when you become intimate with a merchant you fail to continue to impress upon him the merits of your merchandise. However tight a rope the salesman feels that he has upon a merchant, he should never cease to let him know and make him feel that the goods he is selling are strictly right; for if he lets the line slacken a little the merchant may take a run and snap it in two.

One of my hat friends once told me how he went in to see an old customer named Williams, down in Texas, and found that he had bought a bill.

“When I reached home,” said he, “I handed my checks to a porter, slipped half a dollar into his hand and told him to rush my trunks right up to the sample room.”

This is a thing that a salesman should do on general principles. When he has spent several dollars and many hours to get to a town he should bear in mind that he is there for business, and that he cannot do business well unless he has his goods in a sample room. The man who goes out to work trade with his trunks at the depot does so with only half a heart. If a man persuades himself that there is no business in a town for him he would better pass it up. When he gets to a town the first thing he should do is to get out samples.

“When I had opened up my line,” continued my friend, “I went over to Williams' store. I called at the window as usual and said, 'Well, Williams, I am open and ready for you at any time. When shall we go over?'

“'To tell the truth, Dickie,' said he, 'I've bought your line for this season. I might just as well come square out with it.'

“'That is all right, Joe,' said I. 'If that is the case, it will save us the trouble of doing the work over again.' In truth, my heart had sunk clear down to my heels, but I never let on. I simply smiled over the situation. The worst thing I could have done would be to get mad and pout about it. Had I done so I should have lost out for good. The salesman who drops a crippled wing weakens himself, so I put on a smiling front. This made Williams become apologetic, for when he saw that I took the situation good−naturedly he felt sorry that he could not give me business and began to make explanations.

“'I tell you,' said he, 'this other man came around and told me that he could sell me a hat for twenty−one

dollars a dozen as good as you are selling for twenty−four, and I thought it was to my business interest to buy them. I thought I might as well have that extra twenty−five cents on every hat as your firm.'

"There! He had given me my chance! 'Williams,' said I, 'you bought these other goods on your judgment. Do you not owe it to yourself to know how good your judgment on hats is? You and I have been such good friends—Heaven knows I have not a better one in this country, Joe— that I never talk business to you and George, your buyer. Now, I'll tell you what is a fair proposition. You and George come over to my sample room this afternoon at 1:30—I leave at four—and I will find out how good your judgment and George's is when it comes to buying hats.' Williams said: 'All right, 1:30 goes.'

[Illustration: "To−night we dance. To−morrow we sell clothes again."]

"I immediately left, having a definite appointment. I went to my sample room and laid out in a line twelve different samples of hats, the prices of which ranged, in jumps of three dollars per dozen, from nine dollars to twenty−seven dollars. In the afternoon I went back to the store and got Williams and George. As we entered the sample room, I said: 'Now, Williams, we are over here—you, George and myself—to see what you know about hats. If there is any line of goods in which you should know values, certainly it is the line you have been handling for six years. You have fingered them over every day and ought to know the prices of them. Here is a line of goods right out of the house from which you have been buying so long. The prices range from nine dollars to twenty−seven dollars a dozen. Will it not be a fair test of your judgment and George's for you to examine these goods very carefully—everything but the brands—for these would indicate the price—and lay out this line so that the cheaper hats will be at one end of the bunch and the best ones at the other? Very well! Now just straighten out this line according to price.'

"'Well, that looks fair to me,' said Williams.

"He and George went to work to straighten out the goods according to price. They put a nine dollar hat where a twelve dollar hat should have been, and vice versa. They put a twenty−four dollar hat where a twenty−four dollar hat belonged, and an eighteen dollar hat right beside it, indicating that the two were of the same quality. The next hat I handed them was one worth sixteen dollars and a half a dozen. It contained considerable chalk that made it feel smooth. After examining the 'sweat,' name and everything they both agreed that this was a twenty−seven dollars a dozen hat. When they did this, I said:

"'Gentlemen, I will torture you no longer. Let me preface a few remarks by saying that neither one of you knows a single, solitary, blooming thing about hats. Here is a hat that you say is worth twenty− four dollars a dozen. Look at the brand. You have it on your own shelves. You have been buying them of this quality for six years at eighteen dollars a dozen. And, what is worse still, here is a hat the price of which you see in plain figures is sixteen dollars and a half, and you say it is worth twenty−seven dollars a dozen.'

"The faces of Williams and George looked as blank as a freshly whitewashed fence. I saw that I had them. Then was the time for me to be bold. A good account was at stake, and at stake right then. Besides, my reputation was at stake. When a salesman loses a good account the news of it spreads all over his territory, and on account of losing one customer directly he will lose many more indirectly; for merchants will hear of it and on the strength of the information, lose confidence in the line itself. On the other hand, if you can knock your competitor out of a good account it is often equal to securing half a dozen more. I did not wish to lose out even for one season, so I said: 'Now look here, Williams, you have bought this other line of goods, and perhaps you feel that you have enough for this season and that you will make the best of a bad bargain. You are satisfied in your own mind, and you have told me as plainly as you ever told me anything in your life, that my goods are better than those that you have bought. I am going to tell you one thing now that I would not say in the beginning: that you have bought from a line of samples the goods of which will not equal the samples you have looked at. It is not the samples that you buy but it is the goods that are *delivered* to you. Those which will be delivered will not be as good as those which you looked at. You know full well that my goods have always come up to samples. You know that they are reliable. Why do you wish to change? If you wish to change for the sake of making an additional twenty−five cents on each hat instead of giving it to my firm, why did you not take the hat which I have been selling you all the time for $18 a dozen and sell it for three dollars, the price you have always been getting for my twenty−four dollars a dozen hats? In that way you would make an additional twenty−five cents. Be logical! If that's not profit enough, why not sell a $15 or a $12 a dozen hat for $3? Be logical! If that's not enough, why not hire a big burly duffer to stand at your front door, knock down every man who comes in so that you can take all the money he has

without giving him anything. You could bury him in the cellar. Be logical.'

“"'Fraid they'd put me in the “pen",' said Williams.

“'If I were a judge and you were brought before me charged with selling the twenty−one dollars a dozen hat that you have bought to take the place of mine (for which I charge you twenty−four dollars a dozen) I would give you a life sentence. Let me tell you, Williams, a man who is in business, if he expects to remain in the same place a long time, must give good values to his customers. In the course of time they will find out whether the stuff he gives them is good or poor. Go into a large establishment with a good reputation and you will find out that they give to the people who come to buy merchandise from them good values. Now, the goods I have sold you have always given your trade satisfaction. Your business in my department is increasing, so you say, and the reason is because you are giving to your customers good values. Why not continue to pursue this same policy? I am in town to do business and to do business today. I cannot and I will not take a turn down. If you want to continue to buy my goods you must buy them and buy them right now, even if you do have to take them right on top of the other stuff that you have bought. I shall make no compromise. My price is $1,000—more than you ever bought from me before.'

“'George,' said Williams, turning to his buyer, 'I guess Dickie has us. Give him an order for $1,000 and don't let's go chasing the end of a rainbow in such a hurry any more.'”

CHAPTER IV. TRICKS OF THE TRADE.

The man who believes that on every traveling man's head should rest a dunce cap will some fine day get badly fooled if he continues to rub up against the drummer. The road is the biggest college in the world. Its classrooms are not confined within a few gray stone buildings with red slate roofs; they are the nooks and corners of the earth. Its teachers are not a few half starved silk worms feeding upon green leaves doled out by philanthropic millionaires, but live, active men who plant their own mulberry trees. When a man gets a sheepskin from this school, he doesn't need to go scuffling around for work; he already has a job. Its museum contains, not a few small specimens of ore, but is the mine itself.

Let your son take an ante−graduate course of a few years on the road and he will know to what use to put his book learning when he gets that. I do not decry book lore; the midnight incandescent burned over the classic page is a good thing. I am merely saying that lots of good copper wire goes to waste, because too many college “grads” start their education wrong end first. They do not know for what they are working. If I were running a school my way and the object was to teach a boy *method*, I'd hand him a sample grip before I'd give him a volume of Euclid. Last night a few ideas struck me when I thought my day's work was done. I jumped out of bed seven times in twenty minutes and struck seven matches so I could see to jot down the points. The man on the road learns to *“do it now.”* Too many traveling men waste their months of leisure. Like Thomas Moore, in their older days they will wail:

“Thus many, like me, who in youth should have tasted
The fountain that flows by philosophy's shrine,
Their time with the flowers on its margin have wasted
And left their light urns all as empty as mine.”

Yet many improve their hours of leisure from business; if they do not, it is their own fault. I met an old acquaintance on the street yesterday. “My season is too short,” said he. “I wish I could find something to do between trips.” I asked him why he did not write for newspapers or do a dozen other things that I mentioned. “I'm incapable,” he replied. “Well, that isn't my fault,” said I. “No,” he answered, *“it's mine!”*

I know one man on the road who found time to learn the German language. And, by the way, he told me how it once served him a good turn.

“Once,” said he, “when I was up in Minnesota, a few years ago, I got a big merchant to come over and look at my goods. That, you know, was half of the battle.”

And so it is! When a merchant goes into a drummer's sample room, he is on the field of Liao Yang and, if he doesn't look out, the drummer will prove himself the Jap!

“It was my first trip to the town,” continued my friend. “The first thing my prospective customer picked up after he came into my room was a sample of a 'Yucatan' hat. You know how it goes—when a merchant comes into your sample room for the first time he picks up the things he knows the price of. If the prices on these are high, he soon leaves you; if they seem right to him he has confidence in the rest of your line and usually buys if the styles suit him. The way to sell goods is either to have lower prices or else make your line show up better than your competitor's. Even though your prices be the same as his, you can often win out by *displaying* your goods better than your competitor does. Many a time he is too lazy to spread his goods and show what he really has; and his customer thinks the line 'on the bum' when, in truth, it is not.

“The merchant, Alex Strauss was his name, couldn't have picked up a luckier thing for me than this Yucatan hat. The year previous, my house had imported them finished, but that year we had had them trimmed in our own shop. The duty was much less on the unfinished body than on the trimmed hat; therefore, the price had dropped considerably.

“'How much do you vant for dis?' said Strauss, picking up the Yucatan.

“Nine dollars a dozen,” said I, without explaining why the price was so low. It would have been as foolish for me to do this, you know, as to play poker with my cards on the table face up.

“Strauss turned to his clerk Morris, who was with him. They both examined the hat, and Alex said in German to Morris: 'Den selben Hut haben wir gehabt. Letzes Jahr haben wir sechzehn und ein halb den Dutzen bezahlt.

Das ist sehr billig!' *(The same hat we had. Last year we paid sixteen and a half a dozen. This is very cheap.)*

"Then Alex turned to me—he was a noted bluffer—and said in English: 'Hefens alife! Nine tollars! Vy, I pought 'em last year for sefen and a half!'

"I never saw such a bold stand in my life. The expression on his face would have won a jackpot on a bob−tailed flush. But I was in position to call his bluff. *His* cards were on the table face up.

"I merely repeated his own words in his own tongue: 'Den selben Hut haben wir gehabt. Letzes Jahr haben wir sechzehn und ein halb den Dutzen bezahlt. Das ist sehr billig.'

"'Hier, dake a seecar on me,' said Alex, offering me a smoke. He bought a good bill from me and has been a good customer ever since.

"Just to let you know what a hard proposition Strauss was, I'll tell you another incident in connection with him:

"'After I had known Alex for two years I went into his store one morning, when I was on my fall trip. He came from behind the counter to meet me, wearing upon his face a smile of triumph. He had never approached me before; I always had to hunt him down.

"I said, 'Hello, Alex, how goes it?'

"'Dis is how choes id,' said he, handing me a card. 'Dot's de way id choes mit ev'rypody dis season.'

"On the card which he handed me—and to every traveling man who, came in—were these words: 'Don't waste your time on me; I will not buy any goods until I go to market. Alex.'

"Reading the card quickly, I said to him: 'Thank you, Alex, may I have another one of these cards?'

"He handed me another one, saying, 'Vot you vant mit anudder vun?'

"'I want one to hold as a keepsake of the man, of all men, who is gladdest to see me when I get around; the other I shall pin to the order I shall take from you today and send to my firm.'

"With a sweeping bow, I said, 'Adieu, Alex; Auf wiedersehen,' and left the store.

"I knew Alex's habits. He always went to dinner when the town clock struck twelve. A deaf shoemaker in the next block regulated his watch, they say, by Alex's movements. A few minutes past twelve I went back to the store and left on the front show case a bunch of samples done up in a red cloth. On some of them were large green tags telling the quantity I had of each and the price. I also wrote on the green tags the words 'Job Lot.'

"I knew that Alex would see the bundle; and I knew that he would open it—a merchant will always look at samples if you take them to his store. I also knew that Alex, when he saw the mystic words 'Job Lot,' would be half crazy. Adam and Eve were not more tempted by the forbidden fruit than is the Yehuda (Hebrew) merchant by a metziah (bargain).

"I went back to the hotel. After luncheon I sent out my advance cards and took up a book. My mind was perfectly easy, because I knew just exactly what was going to happen.

"At a quarter to six, Abie, Alex's boy, disturbed me while I was in the middle of a chapter and said: 'Papa wants to see you right away. The store closes at six.'

"I knew that meant business, but I said to Abie: 'Tell your papa if he'll excuse me I'll not come over. Won't you please say goodbye to him for me? And won't you, Abie, like a good boy—bring me a bundle I left on the show case. It has a red cloth around it.'

"Finishing my chapter, I started slowly toward Alex's store. I met Abie. But he didn't have the red bundle—I knew he wouldn't.

"'Papa says, come over. He wants to see you,' said Abie.

"As I went into the store a minute before six, Alex was pacing up and down the floor. My samples were spread upon the show case.

"'Eff you vant your samples, dake 'em avay yourself. Do you subbose I raice poys to vait on draveling men?' said Alex. He was keeping up his bluff well.

"With this I began to stack together my samples.

"'Vait! Vait!' said Alex, 'Aind you choing to gif a man a jance to puy some choots?'

"'Sure,' said I, 'if you want to, but I thought you were going to wait until you went into market.'

"'Vell, you vas a taisy,' said Alex; and in three minutes—he was the quickest buyer I ever saw—I booked an order for six hundred dollars.

"'Now, I see,' said Alex, as he shook hands and started home, 'Vot you vanted mit dot udder cart.'"

Strategy will win out in business, but not deception. The traveling man who wishes to win in the race of commerce, if he plays sharp tricks, will get left at the quarter post. It is rather hard, sometimes, to keep from plucking apples that grow in the garden of deception, especially if they hang over the fence. I sat one night beside one of the boys who was sending out his advance cards. He was making his first trip over a new territory.

"Blast it!" said he, tearing up a card he had written.

"Don't swear, or you'll not catch any fish," said I.

"Yes, but I did such a fool thing. I addressed a card to a merchant and then turned it over and signed his name—not mine—to it. Wasn't that a fool thing to do?"

"No, not at all," I replied, laughing. "If you had sent that card to him, he would have read it. Otherwise, he will chuck the one you do send into the basket."

"Bright idea!" quoth my friend.

A few months afterward I met this same man. "Say," said he, "that was a straight tip you gave me on that advance card scheme. It worked like a charm. Half of the men I went to see had kept the cards on their desks and I had no trouble getting their ears. Some were expecting a long lost relative. When they showed me my cards with their names on them I was always amazed at such a queer mistake. There was one exception. I told one man why I did it, and he nearly threw me out of his store."

When I was told this I felt ashamed to think I had taught duplicity to an innocent. I did not know to what it might lead him.

Stolen fruits may look like they are sweet, but taste them, and they are bitter. I knew a man who sold shoes in the State of Washington. He was shrewd and sharp. He learned of an old Englishman who, although his store was in an out of the way town, did a large business. The shoeman wrote half a dozen letters to himself care of the old Englishman, addressing them as "Lord" So and So. When he reached the town the Englishman most graciously handed him the letters, and to all questions of the shoeman, who commanded a good British accent, answered, "Yes, my lord," or "No, my lord."

The shoe man explained that, like the merchant, he had hated to leave the old country, but that America—sad to state—was a more thrifty country and he had invested in a large shoe factory in Boston. He said he was merely out traveling for his health and to look over the country with a view to placing a traveling salesman on the territory. The Englishman gave him a large open order, supposing, of course, that a lord would carry no samples. The old merchant was so tickled at having a chance to buy from a lord that, notwithstanding his reserve, he one day told his dry goods man about it. This was shortly before the goods arrived.

"Why, that fellow," said the dry goods man, "is no more of a lord than I am. He is not even an Englishman." He did not know that he was "queering" a bill, for this is one thing that one traveling man will never deliberately do to another. He knows too well what a battle it is to win a bill, and he will not knowingly snatch from the victor the spoils of war.

The old Englishman returned the "lord's" goods without opening the cases.

Although the lord did not steal a base on his sharp run, I know of one instance where a shrewd traveling man sold a bill by a smart trick.

In Ohio there was a merchant notoriously hard to approach. He was one of the kind who, when you told him your business, would whistle and walk away and who would always have something to do in another part of the store when you drew near him the second time. What an amount of trouble a man of that kind makes for himself! The traveling man is always ready to "make it short." When he goes into a store the thing he wishes to know, and how quickly, is: "Can I do any business here?" The merchant will have no trouble getting rid of the drummer if he will only be frank. All he must do is to give a fair reason why he does not wish to do business. He can say: "I have bought"—that is the best one, if it is true; it is the index finger pointing out a short route for the salesman straight to the front door. Or, he can say: "I have all in that line I can use for some time." "I have an old personal friend to whom I give my trade for these goods—he treats me squarely" is a good answer. So, too, is the statement, "I have an established trade on this brand, my customers ask for it, and it gives them entire satisfaction—what's the use of changing?" Any one of these statements will either rid the merchant of the traveling man or else raise an issue soon settled.

I will let my friend himself tell how he got the ear of the whistling merchant.

"The boys had told me old Jenkins was hard to get next to, but I made up my mind to reach him. It's lots more

fun anyway to land a trout in swift water than to pull a carp out of a muddy pond; besides the game fish is better to eat. When I went into his store, Jenkins fled from me, and going into his private office, slammed the door behind him. I made for the office. I had not come within ten feet from the window before the old man said gruffly: 'I don't want to buy any goods; I don't want even to listen to a traveling man this morning.'

"This did not stop me. I walked to the window, took a pad of paper out of my pocket and wrote on a slip: 'I have some samples I would like to show you. I will bring them over.' I handed the slip to old Jenkins and left him. The man who can do the odd, unexpected thing, is the one who gets the ear.

"When I brought my samples in—I sell a specialty line of baby shoes— I spread them on the counter. The old man was curious to see what a 'deaf and dumb man' was selling, I suppose, for up he marched and looked at my line. He picked up a shoe and wrote on a piece of paper: 'How much?' I wrote the price and passed the slip back to him. 'What are your terms?' he wrote back. 'Bill dated November 1st, 5% off, ten days,' I replied on paper. 'Price your line right through,' he scribbled.

"With this I wrote the price of each shoe on a slip and put it under the sample. Old Jenkins called his shoe man. They both agreed that the line was exceptional—just what they wanted—and that the prices were low. But the old man wrote: 'Can't use any of your goods; the line I am buying is cheaper.'

"I made no answer to this but began packing my grip. The old man tried to write me so fast that he broke the points off his pencil and the clerk's. While he sharpened his pencil I kept on packing. He took hold of my hand and made a curious sign, saying, 'Wait.' But I went right on until the old man had written: 'Don't pack up. I will buy some goods from you because I feel sorry for you.'

"'Thank you, sir,' I wrote, 'but I am no charity bird; I want to sell goods only to those who appreciate my values. Charity orders are always small ones and a small one will not be sufficient for me to give you the exclusive sale.' That was a clincher, for when a merchant sees a good thing he will overbuy, you know, just to keep his competitor from having a chance at it. I started again packing.

"'I really like your goods and will buy a nice bill if you will sell no one else in town,' wrote the old man nervously. 'I was only joking with you.'

"Just as I had finished writing down my order, never having spoken a word to old Jenkins, a traveling man friend came in and said, in his presence: 'Hello, Billy! How are you?'

"'Pretty well, thank you,' said I.

"'What! Can you hear and talk?' half yelled the old man.

"'To be sure,' I wrote back, 'but it would have been impolite to talk to you; because you said, as I drew near the window, you didn't wish to listen to a traveling man this morning. Thank you for your order. Good−bye.'

"The old man never forgot that day. The last time I was around, he said, 'Confound you, Billy! What makes you ask me if I want any baby shoes? You know I do and that I want yours. I believe, though, if you were to die I'd have to quit handling the line; it would seem so strange to buy them from any but a deaf and dumb man.'"

It is all right for the traveling man to put his wit against the peculiarities of a wise, crusty old buyer, but it is wrong to play smart with a confiding merchant who knows comparatively little of the world. The innocent will learn.

A clothing man once told me of a sharp scheme he once worked on a Minnesota merchant.

"When I was up in Saint Paul on my last trip," said he, "a country merchant—what a 'yokel' he was!—came in to meet me. He had written my house he wanted to see their line. But when he reached the hotel another clothing man grabbed him and got him to say he would look at his line after he had seen mine. When he came into my room, I could see something was wrong. I could not get him to lay out a single garment. When a merchant begins to put samples aside, you've got him sure. After a while, he said: 'Well, I want to knock around a little; I'll be in to see you after dinner.'

"'I am expecting you to dine with me,' said I. 'It's after eleven now; you won't have time to go around any. You'd better wait until this afternoon.' I smelt a mouse, as there were other clothing men in town; so I knew I must hold him. But he was hard to entertain. He wouldn't smoke and wouldn't drink anything but lemonade. Deliver me from the merchant who is on the water wagon or won't even take a cigar! He's hard to get next to. After we finished our lemonade, I brought out my family photographs and kept him listening to me tell how bright my children were—until noon.

"When we finished luncheon I suggested that we go up and do our business as I wanted to leave town as soon

as I could. Then he told me he felt he ought to look at another line before buying and that he had promised another man he would look at his line.

"Had I 'bucked' on that proposition it would have knocked me out, so I said: 'To be sure you should. I certainly do not wish you to buy my goods unless they please you better than any you will see. We claim we are doing business on a more economical scale than any concern in the country. We know this, and I shall be only too glad to have you look at other goods; then you will be better satisfied with ours. I'll take pleasure even in introducing you to several clothing men right here in the house.'

"This line of talk struck ten. My yokel friend said: 'Well, you talk square and I want to buy of you. I like a man who thinks lots of his family, anyway; I've got a big family myself—seven children—baby's just a month old and a fine boy. But I promised my partner I'd look around if I had a chance, and I think I ought to keep my word with him.'

"Luckily there was another salesman from my firm in town and opened up that same day in the hotel. I sent for him, never letting my yokel friend get away from me a foot. I saw the other man, at whose line my friend wished to look, sitting in the office; but I knew he would obey the rule of the road and not come up to the merchant until I had let him go.

[Illustration: "I listened to episodes in the lives of all those seven children"]

"My partner was a deuce of a long time coming. I listened to episodes in the lives of all of those seven children. I took down notes on good remedies for whooping cough, croup, measles, and all the ills that flesh is heir to—and thanked Heaven we had struck that subject! Finally my partner, Sam, came. As he drew near I gave him the wink, and, introducing my friend to him, said: 'Now, Mr. Anderson is in town to buy clothing. I have shown him my line, but he feels he ought to look around. Maybe I haven't all the patterns he wants, and if I can get only a part of the order there is no one I'd rather see get the other than you. Whatever the result, you'll bring Mr. Anderson to my room, 112, when you get through. Show him thoroughly. I'm in no hurry.'

"Sam marched Anderson up to his room. He caught onto my game all right. I knew he would hold him four hours, if necessary, and tell him all about his family history for seven generations.

"When Sam left, I went over to the cigar stand, pulled out my order book and figured about long enough to add up a bill. I filled my cigar case and going over to my competitor, at whose line Anderson had promised to look, offered him one. He had made a sort of 'body snatch' from me anyway and was ashamed to say anything about Anderson, but he asked: 'How's business?'

"'Coming in carriages today,' said I. 'My city customer was over early this morning and, no sooner had he gone than a man from the country came in. Two clothing bills in one day is all right, isn't it? I just turned my country customer over to Sam, as he has a few new patterns in his line I want him to show. Guess I'll go pack up shortly.'

"I hadn't told a point blank lie, and my competitor had no right to ask about my affairs, anyway. He also went to pack up.

"I let Sam entertain Anderson until I knew my competitor was out of the way. Then I sent a note up to him. In due time he brought the merchant down and soon excused himself.

"'That's a mighty nice fellow,' said Anderson, 'but my! his goods are dear. Why, his suits are two to three dollars higher than yours. You'll certainly get my bill. I told my partner I believed your house would be all right to buy from.'

"I took the order from Anderson, but I was half glad when I heard that he had died a few months afterward; for if he had lived he would have been sure to catch up with me when Sam and I were both in market. And then my goose would have been cooked for all time with him, sure."

And so it would.

CHAPTER V. THE HELPING HAND.

The helping hand is often held out by the man on the road. Away from home he is dependent upon the good will of others; he frequently has done for him an act of kindness; he is ever ready to do for others a deed of friendship or charity. Road life trains the heart to gentleness. It carries with it so many opportunities to help the needy. Seldom a day passes that the traveling salesman does not loosen his purse strings for some one in want—no, not that; he carries his money in his vest pocket. Doing one kind act brings the doer such a rich return that he does a second generous deed and soon he has the habit. The liberality of the traveling man does not consist wholly of courting the favor of his merchant friends—he is free with them, but mainly because it is his nature; it is for those from whom he never expects any return that he does the most.

A friend of mine once told this story:

"It was on the train traveling into Lincoln, Nebraska, many years ago. It was near midnight. It was, I believe, my first trip on the road. Just in front of me, in a double seat, sat a poor woman with three young children. As the brakeman called 'Lincoln, the next station! Ten minutes for lunch!' I noticed the woman feeling in her pockets and looking all around. She searched on the seats and on the floor. A companion, Billie Collins, who sat beside me leaned over and asked: 'Madam, have you lost something?'

"Half crying, she replied, 'I can't find my purse—I want to get a cup of coffee; it's got my ticket and money in it and I'm going through to Denver.'

"'We'll help you look for it,' said Billy.

"We searched under the seats and up and down the aisle, but could not find the pocket book. The train was drawing near Lincoln. The poor woman began to cry.

"'It's all the money I've got, too,' she said pitifully. 'I've just lost my husband and I'm going out to my sister's in Colorado. She says I can get work out there. I know I had the ticket. The man took it at Ottumwa and gave it back to me. And I had enough money to buy me a ticket up to Central City where my sister is. They won't put me off, will they? I know I had the ticket. If I only get to Denver, I'll be all right. I guess my sister can send me money to come up to her. I've got enough in my basket for us to eat until she does. I can do without coffee. They won't put me off, wi—ll—?'

"The woman couldn't finish the sentence.

"One of the boys—Ferguson was his name—who sat across the aisle beside a wealthy looking old man, came over. 'Don't you worry a bit, Madam,' said he. 'You'll get through all right. I'll see the conductor.' The old man—a stockholder in a big bank, I afterward learned—merely twirled his thumbs.

"The conductor came where we were and said: 'Yes, she had a ticket when she got on my division. I punched it and handed it back to her. That's all I've got to do with the matter.'

"'But,' spoke up Collins, 'this woman has just lost her husband and hasn't any money either. She's going through to Colorado to get work. Can't you just say to the next conductor that she had a ticket and get him to take care of her and pass her on to the next division?' "'Guess she'll have to get off at Lincoln,' answered the conductor gruffly, 'our orders are to carry no one without transportation.' All railroad men have not yet learned that using horse sense and being polite means promotion.

"The poor woman began to cry but my friend Billie, said: 'Don't cry, Madam, you shall go through all right. Just stay right where you are.'

"The conductor started to move on. 'Now, you just hold on a minute, sir,' said Collins. 'When this train stops you be right here—right here, I say—and go with me to the superintendent in the depot. If you don't you won't be wearing those brass buttons much longer. It's your business, sir, to look after passengers in a fix like this and I'm going to make it my business to see that you attend to yours.'

"The conductor was lots bigger than my friend; but to a coward a mouse seems as big as an elephant and 'brass buttons' said: 'All right, I'll be here; but it won't do no good.'

"As the conductor started down the aisle, Ferguson turned to the woman and said: 'You shall go through all right, Madam; how much money did you have?'

"'Three dollars and sixty−five cents,' she answered—she knew what she had to a penny—three dollars and

sixty−five cents; And I'll bet she knew where every nickel of it came from! A cruel old world this to some people, for a while!

"The train had whistled for Lincoln. Ferguson took off his hat, dropped in a dollar, and passed it over to Billie and me. Then he went down the aisle, saying to the boys, 'Poor woman, husband just died, left three children, going to hunt work in Colorado, lost her purse with ticket and all the money she had.' He came back with nearly enough silver in his hat to break out the crown—eighteen dollars!

"'Will you chip in, Colonel?' said Ferguson to the old man who had been his traveling companion?

"'No,' answered the old skinflint, 'I think the railroad company ought to look after cases of this kind. Ahem! Ahem!'

"'Well,' said Ferguson, snatching the valise out of his seat—I never saw a madder fellow—'We've enough without yours even if you are worth more than all of us. You're so stingy I won't even let my grip stay near you.' "When the train stopped at Lincoln, Billie and Ferguson took the conductor to the superintendent's office. They sent me to the lunch counter. I got back first with a cup of coffee for the mother and a bag for the children. But pretty soon in bolted Billy and Ferguson. Billie handed the woman a pass to Denver, and Ferguson dumped the eighteen dollars into her lap.

"'Oh, that's too much! I'll take just three dollars and give me your name so that I can send that back,' said the woman, happier than any one I ever saw.

"But we all rushed away quickly, Billy saying: 'Oh, never mind our names, madam. Buy something for the children; Good−bye, God bless you!'"

Not the poor widow, alone, but even the big, able−bodied, hungry tramp comes in often to share the drummer's generosity. A friend once told me of a good turn he did for a "Weary Willie" in Butte.

Now if there is any place on earth where a man is justified in being mean, it is in Butte. It is a mining camp. It rests upon bleak, barren hills; the sulphuric fumes, arising from roasting ores, have long since killed out all vegetation. It has not even a sprig of grass. This smoke, also laden with arsenic, sometimes hovers over Butte like a London fog. More wealth is every year dug out of the earth in Butte, and more money is squandered there by more different kinds of people, than in any place of its size on earth. The dictionary needs one adjective which should qualify Butte and no other place. Many a time while there I've expected to see Satan rise up out of a hole. Whenever I start to leave I feel I am going away from the domain of the devil.

"One morning I went down to the depot before five o'clock," said my friend. "I was to take a belated train. It was below zero, yet I paced up and down the platform outside breathing the sulphur smoke. I was anxious to catch sight of the train. Through the bluish haze, the lamp in the depot cast a light upon a man standing near the track. I went over to him, supposing he was a fellow traveling man. But he was only a tramp who had been fired out of the waiting room. I wore a warm chinchilla, but it made my teeth chatter to see this shivering 'hobo' —his hands in his pockets and his last summer's light weight pinned close around his throat.

"'Fine morning, old man,' said I.

"'Maybe you t'ink so, Major,' replied the hobo, 'but you stan' out in de breeze long's I have in Fourt' of Chuly togs an' you'll have to have a long pipe dream to t'ink it's a fine mornin'. Say, pard, cup o' coffee an' a sinker wouldn't go bad.'

"I took the tramp to the lunch counter. I was hungry myself and told the waiter to give him what he wanted.

"'Cup o' coffee an' a sand'ich—t'ick slab o' de pig, Cap'n, please,' said my hobo friend. "I saw some strawberries behind the counter and I said to the waiter: 'Just start us both in on strawberries and cream, then let us have coffee and some of that fried chicken.'

"'Sport, you are in on this,' said I to the tramp.

"He unpinned his coat and looked with longing eyes on the waiter as he pulled the caps off the berries; he never said a word, merely swallowing the secretion from his glands. When he had gulped his berries, I told the waiter to give him some more.

"'Ever hungry, Major?' said the hobo. 'Dat's kind a feather weight for my ap'tite. Let me have a ham sand'ich 'stead.

"'No, go on, you shall have a good square meal. Here, take some more berries and have this fried chicken,' I answered, shoving over another bowl of fruit and a big dish with a half a dozen cooked chickens on it. 'Help yourself like it all belonged to you.'

"The hobo ate two halves of chicken, drained his cup of coffee and started to get down from his stool. But: he cast a hungry look at the dish of chicken.

"'Have some more, old man,' said I.

"'It's been s'long since I had a good square that I could stan' a little more, Major; but let me go up against a ham sand'ich—it's got a longer reach.'

"'No, have chicken—all the chicken you want—and some more coffee,' said I.

"Eat! How that fellow did go for it—five pieces of chicken! I'd rather see him repeat that performance than go to a minstrel show. He slid off his stool again, saying: 'Major, I guess I'm all in. T'anks.'

"'Oh, no; have some pie,' I said.

"'Well,' he replied, 'Major, 's you shift the deck, guess I will play one more frame.'

"'Gash o' apple,' said Weary to the waiter.

"When I insisted upon his having a third piece of pie, the hobo said: 'No, Major, t'anks, I got to ring off or I'll break de bank.'

"He, for once, had enough. I gave him a cigar. He sat down to smoke— contented, I thought. I paid the bill; things are high in Montana, you know—his part was $2.85. My hobo friend saw $3.55 rung up on the cash register. Then I went over and sat down beside him.

"'Feeling good?' said I.

"'Yep, but chee! Dat feed, spread out, would a lasted me clean to Sain' Paul.'"

Although the traveling man will feed the hungry tramp on early strawberries and fried chicken when ham sandwiches straight would touch the spot better, all of his generosity is not for fun. A drug salesman told me this experience:

"A few years ago," said he, "I was over in one of the towns I make in Oregon. I reached there on Saturday evening. I went to my customer's store. Just before he closed he said to me: 'I'll take you to−night to hear some good music.'

"'Where is it?' said I. 'I'll be glad to go along.'

"'It's down the street a couple of blocks; it's a kind of garden. A family runs it. The old man serves drinks and the rest of the family— his wife and three daughters—play, to draw the crowd. I want you to hear the oldest girl play the violin.'

"Now, traveling men are ready any time to go anywhere. Sometimes they fly around the arc light, but they can buzz close and not get their wings scorched. They must keep their heads clear and they do, nowadays, you know. It's not as it was in the old days when the man who could tell the most yarns sold the most goods; the old fashioned traveling man is as much behind the times as a bobtailed street car. Well, of course, I told my friend Jerry that I'd go along. I should have put in my time working on new trade, but he was one of the best fellows in the world and one of my best friends. Yet he would not give me much of his business; we were too well acquainted.

"When we went to the garden—Jerry, his partner ner and myself—we sat up front. We could look over the crowd. It was a place for men only. The dozen tables were nearly all full, most of the seats being occupied by men from the mines—some of them wearing blue flannel shirts. But the crowd was orderly. The music made them so. The oldest daughter was only seventeen, but she looked twenty−three. She showed that she'd had enough experience in her life, though, to be gray. There was a tortured soul behind her music. Even when she played a ragtime tune she would repeat the same notes slowly and get a chord out of them that went straight to the heart. The men all bought rounds of drinks freely between the numbers, but they let them remain untasted; they drank, rather, the music.

"We listened for two hours. The music suited my mood. I was a long way from home. Most of the men there felt as I did. Twelve o'clock came, yet no one had left the garden. More had come. Many stood. All were waiting for the final number, which was the same every night, 'Home, Sweet Home.'

"There is something more enchanting about this air than any other in the world. Perhaps this is because it carries one back when he once has 'passed its portals' to his 'Childhood's Joyland—Little Girl and Boyland.' It reminds him of his own happy young days or else recalls the little ones at home at play with their toys. I know I thought of my own dear little tots when I heard the strain. How that girl did play the splendid old melody! I closed my eyes. The garden became a mountain stream, the tones of the violin its beautiful ripples— ripples which

flowed right on even when the sound had ceased.

"'Home, Sweet Home!' I thought of mine. I thought of the girl's—a beer garden!

"'Boys,' said I to Jerry and his partner, 'I am going up to shake hands with that girl; I owe her a whole lot. She's a genius.' I went. And I thanked her, too, and told her how well she had played and how happy she had made me.

"'I'm glad somebody can be happy,' she answered, drooping her big, blue eyes.

"'But aren't you happy in your music?' I asked.

"'Yes,' she replied in such a sad way that it meant a million nos.

"When I went back to my friends they told me the girl's father was not of much account or otherwise he would send her off to a good teacher.

"'Now, that's going to take only a few hundred dollars,' said I. 'You are here on the spot and there surely ought to be enough money in the town to educate this girl. I can't stay here to do this thing, but you can put me down for fifty.'

"Well, sir, do you know the people in the town did help that girl along. When the women heard what a traveling man was willing to do, they no longer barred her out because, for bread, she played a violin in a beer garden, but they opened their doors to her and helped her along. The girl got a music class and with some assistance went to a conservatory of music in Boston where she is studying today."

Traveling men are not angels; yet in their black wings are stuck more white feathers than they are given credit for—this is because some of the feathers grow on the under side of their wings. Much of evil, anyway, like good, is in the thinking. It is wrong to say a fruit is sour until you taste it; is it right to condemn the drummer before you know him?

Days—and nights, too—of hard work often come together in the life of the road man. Then comes one day when he rides many hours, perhaps twenty−four, on the train. He needs to forget his business; he does. Less frequently, I wager, than university students, yet sometimes the drummer will try his hand at a moderate limit in the great American game.

A year or more ago a party of four commercial travelers were making the trip from Portland to San Francisco, a ride of thirty−six hours— two nights and one day. They occupied the drawing room. After breakfast, on the day of the journey, one of the boys proposed a game of ten cent limit "draw." They all took part. There is something in the game of poker that will keep one's eyes open longer than will the fear of death, so the four kept on playing until time for luncheon. About one o'clock the train stopped for half an hour at a town in Southern Oregon. The party went out to take a stretch. Instead of going into the dining room they bought, at the lunch counter, some sandwiches, hard boiled eggs, doughnuts and pies and put them in their compartment. On the platform an old man had cider for sale; they bought some of that. Several youngsters sold strawberries and cherries. The boys also bought some of these. In fact, they found enough for a wholesome, appetizing spread.

The train was delayed longer than usual. The boys, tired of walking, came back to their quarters. They asked me to have some lunch with them. Just as one of the party opened a bottle of cider a little, barefoot, crippled boy, carrying his crutch under one arm and a basket half full of strawberries under the other, passed beneath the window of their drawing room.

"Strawberries. Nice fresh strawberries, misters—only a dime a box," called out the boy. "Three for a quarter if you'll take that many."

There he was, the youthful drummer, doing in his boyish way just what we were—making a living, and supporting somebody, too, by finding his customer and then selling him. He was bright, clean and active; but sadly crippled.

"Let's buy him out," said the youngest of our party—I was now one of them.

"No, let's make a jackpot, the winner to give all the winnings to the boy for his berries," spoke up the oldest.

The pot was opened on the first hand. The limit had been ten cents, but the opener said "I'll 'crack' it for fifty cents, if all are agreed."

Every man stayed in—for the boy! Strangely enough four of us caught on the draw.

"Bet fifty cents," said the opener.

"Call your fifty," said numbers two and three, dropping in their chips.

"Raise it fifty," spoke up number four.

The other three "saw the raise."

"Three Jacks," said the opener.

"Beats me," said number two.

"Three queens here," said number three.

"Bobtail," spoke up number four.

"Makes no difference what you have," broke in number three. "I've the top hand, but the whole pot belongs to the boy. The low hand, though, shall go out and get the berries."

As the train pulled out, the little barefoot drummer with $6.50 hobbled across the muddy street, the proudest boy in all Oregon; but he was not so happy as were his five big brothers in the receding car.

Brethren, did I say. Yes, Brethren! To the man on the road, every one he meets is his brother—no more, no less. He feels that he is as good as the governor, that he is no better than the boy who shines his shoes. The traveling man, if he succeeds, soon becomes a member of the Great Fraternity—the Brotherhood of Man. The ensign of this order is the Helping Hand.

I once overheard one of the boys tell how he had helped an old Frenchman.

"I was down in Southern Idaho last trip," said he. "While waiting at the station for a train to go up to Hailey, an old man came to the ticket window and asked how much the fare was to Butte. The agent told him the amount—considerably more than ten dollars.

"'Mon Dieu! Is it so far as that?' said the old man. 'Eh bien! (very well) I must find some work.'

"But he was a chipper old fellow. I had noticed him that morning offering to run a foot race with the boys. He wasn't worried a bit when the agent told him how much the fare to Butte was. He was really comical, merely shrugging his shoulders and smiling when he said: 'Very well, I must find some work.' Cares lighten care.

"The old man, leaving the ticket window, sat down on a bench, made the sign of a cross and took out a prayer book. When he had finished reading I went over and sat beside him. I talked with him. He was one of Nature's noblemen without a title. He was a French Canadian. He came to Montana early in the sixties and worked in the mines. Wages were high, but he married and his wife became an invalid; doctors and medicines took nearly all of his money. He struggled on for over thirty years, taking money out of the ground and putting it into pill boxes. Finally he was advised to take his wife to a lower altitude. He moved to the coast and settled in the Willamette Valley, in Oregon. His wife became better at first; then she grew sick again. More medicine!

"Well, sir, do you know that old man—over seventy years of age—was working his way back to Butte to hunt work in the mines again. I spoke French to him and asked him how much money he had. 'Not much,' said he—and he took out his purse. How much do you suppose the old man had in it? Just thirty−five cents! I had just spent half a dollar for cigars and tossed them around. To see that old man, separated from his wife, having to hunt for work to get money so he could go where he could hunt more work that he might only buy medicine for a sick old woman and with just three dimes and a nickel in his purse—was too much for me! I said to myself: 'I'll cut out smoking for two days and give what I would spend to the old man.'

"I put a pair of silver dollars into the old man's purse to keep company with his three dimes and one nickel. It made them look like orphans that had found a home. 'Mon Dieu! Monsieur, vous etes un ange du ciel. Merci. Merci.' (My God, sir, you are an angel from Heaven. Thank you. Thank you.) said the old man. 'But you must give me your address and let me send back the money!'

"I asked my old friend to give me his name and told him that I would send him my address to Butte so he would be sure to get it; that he might lose it if he put it in his pocket.

"He told me his name. I gave him a note to the superintendent at Pocatello, asking him to pass the old Frenchman to Butte. We talked until my train started. Every few sentences, the old man would say: ' Que Dieu vous benisse, mon enfant!' (May God bless you, my boy!)

"As I stood on the back end of my train, pulling away from the station, the old man looked at me saying:

"'Adieu! Adieu!' Then, looking up into the sky, he made a sign of the cross and said: 'Que Dieu vous protege, mon enfant!' (May God protect you, my boy!)

"That blessing was worth a copper mine."

CHAPTER VI. HOW TO GET ON THE ROAD.

Since starting on the road many have asked me: "How can I get a job on the road?"

Young men and old men have asked me this—clerks, stock boys, merchants and students. Even wives have asked me how to find places for their husbands.

Let's clear the ground of dead timber. Old men of any sort and young men who haven't fire in their eyes and ginger in their feet need not apply. The "Old Man," who sits in the head office sizes up the man who wishes to go out on the road and spend a whole lot of the firm's money for traveling expenses with a great deal more care than the dean of a college measures the youth who comes to enter school. The dean thinks: "Well, maybe we can make something out of this boy, dull as he is. We'll try." But the business man says: "That fellow is no good. He can't sell goods. What's the use of wasting money on him and covering a valuable territory with a dummy?"

On the other hand, the heads of wholesale houses are ever on the watch for bright young men. This is no stale preachment, but a live fact! There are hundreds of road positions open in every city in America. Almost any large firm would put on ten first class men to−morrow, but they can't find the men.

The "stock" is the best training school for the road—the stock boy is the drummer student. Once in a while an old merchant, tiring of the routine of the retail business, may get a "commission job"—that is, he may find a position to travel for some firm, usually a "snide outfit"—if he will agree to pay his own traveling expenses and accept for his salary a percentage of his sales shipped. Beware, my friend, of the "commission job!" Reliable firms seldom care to put out a man who does not "look good enough" to justify them in at least guaranteeing him a salary he can live on. They know that if a man feels he is going to live and not lag behind, he will work better. The commission salesman is afraid to spend his own money; yet, were he to have the firm's money to spend, many a man who fails would succeed. Once in a while a retail clerk may get a place on the road, but the "Old Man" does not look on the clerk with favor. The clerk has had things come his way too easy. His customers come to him; the man on the road must go after his customers. It is the stock boy who has the best show to get on the road.

The stock boy learns his business from the ground up or better, as the Germans say, "from the house out." If one young man cannot become a surgeon without going through the dissecting room, then another cannot become a successful drummer without having worked in stock. The merchant, who oft−times deals in many lines, wishes to buy his goods from the man who knows his business; and unless a man knows his business he would better never start on the road.

But, my dear boy, to merely know your business is not all. You may know that this razor is worth $12.00 a dozen and that one $13.50; that this handle is bone and that one celluloid; but that won't get you on the road. You must have a good front. I do not mean by this that you must have just exactly 990 hairs on each side of the "part" on your head; that your shoes must be shined, your trousers creased, your collar clean and your necktie just so. Neatness is a "without−which−not;" but there must be more—a boy must work hard, be polite, honest, full of force, bright, quick, frank, good−natured. The "Old Man" may keep to sweep the floor a lazy, shiftless, stupid, silly, grouchy "stiff"; but when he wants some one to go on the road he looks for a live manly man. When you get in stock it is up to you; for eyes are on you, eyes just as anxious to see your good qualities as you are to show them, eyes that are trying to see you make good.

[Illustration: "I braced the old man—it wasn't exactly a freeze. But there was a lot of frost in the air."]

How can I get "in stock?" That's easy. If you are in the city you are on the spot; if you are in the country, "hyke" for the city! See that you haven't any cigarette stains on your fingers or tobacco in the corners of your mouth. Go into the wholesale houses, from door to door—until you find a job. If you are going to let a few or a hundred turn−downs dishearten you, you'd better stay at home; for when you get on the road, turn−downs are what you must go up against every day. If you know some traveling man, or merchant, or manager, or stock boy, maybe he can get you a "job in stock." But remember one thing: When you get there, you must depend upon Number One. Your recommendation is worth nothing to you from that hour on. This is the time when the good front gets in its work.

The city is a strong current, my boy, in which there are many whirlpools ready to suck you under; yet if you are a good swimmer you can splash along here faster than anywhere else. A successful traveling man once told

me how he got on the road.

"I was raised in a little town in Tennessee," said he. "A traveling man whose home was in my native town took me along with him, one day, when he made a team trip to Bucksville, an inland country town, fourteen miles away. That was a great trip for me—fourteen miles, and staying over night in a hotel!—the first time I had ever done so in my life. And for the first time I knew how it felt to have a strange landlord call me "mister." It was on that trip that I caught the fever for travel, and that trip put me on the road!

"When, the next morning after reaching Bucksville, my drummer friend had finished business and packed his trunks, he said to me: 'Billie, I guess you may go and get the team ready.' I answered him, saying, 'The team is ready and backed up, sir, for the trunks.' In three minutes the trunks were loaded in and we were off.

"'Billie,' said my friend—I shall never forget it for it was the dawn of hope for me, as I had never had any idea what I was going to do in after life!—'I'll tell you, Billie, you would make a good drummer, suh. When we drove down yesterday you counted how many more horseflies lit on the bay mare than on the white horse. You reasoned out that the flies lit on the bay because the fly and the mare were about the same color and that the fly was not so liable to be seen and killed as if it had lit on the white. That showed me you notice things and reason about them. To be a good traveling man you must make a business of noticing things and thinking about them. Real good hoss sense is a rare thing. Then, this mo'nin', when I said "Get the team ready," you said "It is ready, suh," and showed me that you look ahead, see what ought to be done and do it without being told. Generally any fool can do what he is told to; but it takes a man of sense to find things to do, and if he has the grit to do them he will get along. I'm just going to see if I can't get a place in our house for you, Billie. You've got the stuff in you to make a successful drummer, suh. Yes, suh! Hoss sense and grit, suh—hoss sense and grit!'

"Sure enough the next Christmas night—I wasn't then sixteen—I struck out for the city in company with my older traveling man friend. He had got me a place in his house. The night I left, my mother said to me: 'Son, I've tried to raise you right. I'll soon find out if I have. I believe I have and that you will get along.' My father then gave me the only word of advice he ever gave me in his life: 'Son, be polite,' said he; 'this will cost you nothing and be worth lots.'

"Well, sir, with those words ringing in my ears: 'Use hoss sense; have grit;' 'Be polite;' 'Son, I've tried to raise you right,' I struck out for the city. As I think it over now, the thing that did me the most good was my father's advice: 'Son, be polite, this will cost you nothing and be worth lots.' The boy can never hope to be much if he does not know that he should tip his hat to a lady, give his seat to a gray−haired man, or carry a bundle for an old woman.

"How strange it was for me that night, to sleep with my friend in a bed on wheels! How strange, the next morning, to wash in a bowl on wheels! and to look out of the Pullman windows as I wiped my face! I was living then! And when I reached the city! Such a bustle I've never seen since. As I walked up a narrow street from the depot, I fell on the slippery sidewalk. 'Better get some ashes on your feet' said my friend. And, indeed, I did need to keep ashes on my feet for a long time. I had before me a longer and more slippery sidewalk than I then dreamed of. Every boy has who goes to the city. But, when he gets his sled to the top, he's in for a long, smooth slide!

"I started in to work for twenty dollars a month—not five dollars a week! I found there was a whole lot of difference, especially when I had to pay $4.50 a week for board and forty cents for laundry. I was too proud to send home for money and too poor to spend it out of my own purse. Good training this! One winter's day a friend told me there was skating in the park. I asked a gentleman where the park was. 'Go three blocks and take the car going south,' said he. I went three blocks and when the car came along I followed it, for I could not afford a single nickel for car fare. What a fortune I had when, during busy season, I could work nights and get fifty cents extra for supper money! None of this did I spend, as my boarding house wasn't far away. The only money that I spent in a whole year was one dollar for a library ticket—the best dollar I ever spent in my life! Good books, and there are plenty of them free in all cities, are the best things in the world, anyway, to keep a boy out of devilment. The boy who will put into his head what he will get out of good books will win out over the one who gets his clothes full of chalk from billiard cues. One day the "Old Gentleman" saw me at the noon hour as I was going to the library with a book under my arm. 'So you read nights, do you, Billie,' said he. 'Well, you keep it up and you will get ahead of the boys who don't.'

"Work? I worked like a beaver. I was due at seven in the morning. I was always there several minutes before

seven. One morning the old gentleman came in real early and found me at work, while a couple of the other boys were reading the papers and waiting for the seventh strike, and before most of the stock boys had shown up. At noon I would wrap bundles, take a blacking pot and mark cases, run the elevator or do anything to "keep moving." I did not know that an eye was on me all the time; but there was. At the end of a year the old gentleman called me into the office and said: 'Billie, you've done more this year than we have paid you for; here's a check for sixty dollars, five dollars a month back pay. Your salary will be $25.00 a month next year. You may also have a week's vacation.

"How big that sixty was! Rockefeller hasn't as much to−day as I had then. What he has doesn't make him happy; he wants more. I had enough. Why, I was able to buy a new rig−out. I can see that plaid suit of clothes to this day! I could afford to go home looking slick, to visit my mother and father; I could buy a present for my sweetheart, too. The good Lord somehow very wisely puts 'notions' into a young man's head about the time he begins to get on in the world, and the best thing on earth for him when he is away from home is to have some girl away back where he came from think a whole lot of him and send him a crocheted four−in−hand for a Christmas present. This makes him loathe foul lips and the painted cheek. When a boy 'grows wise' he stands, sure's you're born, on the brink of hell. It's a pity that so many, instead of backing away when they get their eyelashes singed a little, jump right in.

"All during my first year I had helped the sample clerk, who had the best job in the house, get out samples for the salesmen. It was not "my business" to do this; but I did it during spare time from my regular work. When I came back from my visit home, the old gentleman found me on the floor one day while I was tagging samples. 'Billie,' said he, 'Fritz (the sample clerk) is going out on the road for us next week. I have decided to let you take his place here in the house. You are pretty young but we think you can do it.'

"I tried to answer back, 'I'll do my best,' but I couldn't say a word. I only choked. The old gentleman had to turn away from me; it was too much for him, too. After he stepped on the elevator, he turned around and smiled at me. I heard him blow his nose after the elevator sunk out of sight. I knew then that he believed in me and I said to myself, 'He shall never lose his faith.'

"In a few days Fritz had gone out on his trip and I was left alone to do his work, the old gentleman handed me a sample book one afternoon near closing time. 'Billie,' says he, 'Gregory is in a hurry for his samples. Express them to Fayetteville.' He had merely written the stock numbers in the book. It was up to me to fill in on the sample book the description of the goods and the prices. This I did that night at home from memory. I had learned the stock that well. I also wrote the sample tickets. It took me until after midnight. Next morning I was waiting at the front door when the early man came to unlock it. That night the samples went to Fayetteville.

"Two days afterward the old gentleman called me to the office and asked me: 'When can Gregory expect his samples? He's in a big hurry.'

"'I sent them Wednesday night, sir,' said I.

"'Wednesday night! Why it was Tuesday night when I gave you the sample book!'

"'I'm sure they went,' said I, 'because I saw the cases go into the express wagon.'

"'All right,' said the old gentleman; and he smiled at me again the same way he did the morning he made me the sample clerk, a smile which told me I had his heart, and I have it to this day.

"Next morning he sent up to me a letter from Gregory, who wrote that the samples came to him in better shape than ever before. At the end of that year I got a check for $150 back pay, and my salary was raised again. At the end of the third year the old gentleman gave me more back pay and another raise, saying to me: 'Billie, I have decided to put you on the road over Moore's old territory. He is not going to be with us any more. Be ready to start January 1st.' I was the youngest man that firm ever put out. I was with them sixteen years and it almost broke my heart to leave them."

"You bet," said I, "the stock boy has a chance if he only knows it."

"Yes," answered my friend, "sure he has. My mother put in my trunk when I left home a Sunday School card on which were the words: 'Thy God seeth thee, my son.' Without irreverence I would advise every stock boy who wants to get on the road to write these words and keep them before him every day: 'The eyes of the old man are upon me.'"

I once heard one of the very successful clothing salesmen of Chicago tell how he got on the road.

"I had been drudging along in the office making out bills for more than a year, at ten a week," said he. "My

father traveled for the firm but he never would do anything to get me started on the road. He thought I would fall down. I was simply crazy to go. I had seen the salesmen get down late, sit around like gentlemen, josh the bosses, smoke good cigars and come and go when they pleased for eight months in the year. This looked better to me than slaving away making out bills from half past seven in the morning until half past six at night, going out at noon hungry as a hound and having to climb a ladder after a ham sandwich, a glass of milk and a piece of apple pie.

"I had kept myself pretty well togged up and, as my father wouldn't do anything to get me started, I made up my mind to go straight to the boss myself. He was a little fat sawed−off. He wore gold−rimmed glasses and whenever he was interested in anybody, he would look at him over his specs. He did not know much about the English language, but he had a whole lot more good common sense than I gave him credit for then. It never hurts a boy in the house, you know, who wants to go on the road to go square up and say so. He may get a turn−down, but the boss will like his spunk, and he stands a better show this way than if he dodges back and waits always for the boss to come to him. Many a boy gets out by striking the 'Old Man' to go out. If the boy puts up a good talk to him the old man will say: 'He came at me pretty well. By Jove, he can approach merchants, and we will give him a chance.'

"One day, pretty soon after I had braced the old man to send me out, a merchant in Iowa wrote in that he wanted to buy a bill of clothing. They looked him up in Dun's and found that he was in the grocery business. My father didn't wish to go out—the town was in his territory. I overheard the old man in the office say to him: 'Let's send Chim.'

"Well, Jim started that night. They told me to take a sleeper, but I sat up all night to save the two dollars. I didn't save much money, though, because in the middle of the night I got hungry and filled up on peanuts and train bananas. The town was up on a branch and I didn't get there until six o'clock the next day. When I reached there, I went right up to my man's store. You ought to have seen his place! The town was about seven hundred, and the store just about evened up with it— groceries and hardware. I got a whiff from a barrel of sauer kraut as I went in the door; on the counter was a cheese case; frying pans and lanterns hung down on hooks from the ceiling; two farmers sat near the stove eating sardines and crackers. No clothing was in sight and I said to myself: 'Well, I'm up against it; this man can't buy much; he hasn't any place to put it if he does.' But I've since learned one thing: You never know who is going to buy goods and how many on the road must learn that the man who has nothing in his line is the very man who can and will buy the most, sometimes, because he hasn't any. And besides, the little man may be just in the notion of spreading himself.

[Illustration: "You ought to have seen his place"]

"A young man was counting eggs back near the coal oil can. He was the only one around who seemed to have anything to do with the store. I walked up to him and told him who I was. He said, 'Yes, we are glad to see you. I'm just out of school and father wants to put me in business here. He is going to put in all his time in the bank. He wants me to take charge of the store. I've told him we could sell other things besides groceries—they are dirty, anyway, and don't pay much profit; so we have started to build on another room right next door and are going to put in other lines. I've told father we ought to put in clothing, but he hasn't fully made up his mind. I'll ask him to come down after supper and you can talk to him.'

"'Hasn't fully made up his mind, and here I am my first time out, 24 hours away, and a big expense,'—all this went through me and I couldn't eat any supper.

"The old banker that evening was just tolerably glad to see me. It wasn't exactly a freeze, but there was lots of frost in the air. He said, after we had talked the thing over, that he would look at my samples the next morning, but that he would not buy unless my line was right and the prices were right. I was sure my 'prices were right.' I had heard the bosses talk a whole year about how cheaply they sold their goods. I had heard them swear at the salesmen for cutting prices and tell them that the goods were marked at bare living profit; and I was green enough to believe this. I also knew that my line was the best one on the road. I had not stopped to figure out how my bosses could stay under their own roof all the time and know so much about other houses' goods and be absolutely sure that their own line was bound to be the best ever. I had heard the road−men many times tell the bosses to 'wake up,' but I did not believe the salesmen. You know that a young fellow, even if he is with a weak house, starts out on his first trip feeling that his house is the best one. Before he gets through with his maiden trip, even though his house is a thoroughbred, he will think it is a selling plater.

"That night I worked until two o'clock opening up. I did not know the marks so I had to squirm out what the

characters meant and put the prices on the tickets in plain figures so I would know what the goods were worth. But this was a good thing. The salesman or the firm that has the honesty and the boldness to mark samples in plain figures and stick absolutely to their marked price, will do business with ease. Merchants in the country do not wish to buy cheaper than those in other towns do; they only wish a square deal. And, say what you will, they are kind o' leery when they buy from samples marked in characters—not plain figures. They often use a blind mark to do scaly work on their own customers and they don't like to have the same game worked on themselves. Honest merchants, and I mean by this those who make only a reasonable profit, mark their goods in plain figures, cut prices to nobody—prefer to do business with those who do it their way. The traveling man who breaks prices soon loses out.

"That night I couldn't sleep. I was up early next morning and had a good fire in my sample room. I had sense enough to make the place where I was going to show my goods as comfortable as I could. I sold a bill of $2,500 and never cut a price.

"When I got home I put the order on the old man's desk and went to my stool to make out bills. The old man came in. He picked up the order and looked over it carefully, then he asked one of the boys: 'Vere's Chim? Tell him to com heer. I vant to see him.'

"I walked into the office. The old man was looking at me over his specs as I went in. He grabbed me by the hand and said so loud you could hear him all over the house: 'Ah, Chim, dot vas tandy orter. How dit you do id mitoud cotting prices, Chim? You vas a motel for efery men we haf in der house. I did nod know we hat a salesman in der office. By Himmel! you got a chob on der roat right avay, Chim.'"

CHAPTER VII. FIRST EXPERIENCES IN SELLING.

I sat with a group of friends around a table one evening not long ago, in one of the dining rooms of the Brown Palace Hotel in Denver. The dining room was done in dark stained oak, the waiters whispered to each other in foreign tongues, French and German; on the walls of the room were pictures of foreign scenes painted by foreign hands; but, aside from this, everything about us was strictly American. We had before us blue points with water−cress salad, mountain trout from the Rockies, and a Porterhouse three inches thick. We had just come out of the brush and were going to "Sunday" in Denver. It was Saturday night, A man who has never been on the road does not know what it is to get a square meal after he has been "high−grassing it" for a week or two, and when such can become the pleasure of a drummer, he quickly forgets the tough "chuck" he has been chewing for many days.

We were all old friends, had known each other in a different territory many years before; so, when we came together again, this time in Denver, not having seen each other for many years, we talked of old times and of when we met with our first experiences on the road.

When a man first begins to hustle trunks he has a whole lot to learn. Usually he has been a stock−boy, knowing very little of the world beyond the bare walls in which he has filled orders. To his fellow travelers the young man on the road is just about as green as they make them, but the rapid way in which he catches on and becomes an old−timer, is a caution.

A great many decry the life of the traveling man, even men on the road themselves are discontented, but if you want to get one who is truly happy and satisfied with his lot, find one who, after having enjoyed the free and independent (yes, and delightful!) life of the road, and then settled down for a little while as a merchant on his own hook, insurance agent, or something of that kind, and finally has gone back to his grips, and you will find a man who will say: "Well, somebody else can do other things, but, for my part, give me the road."

After we had finished with the good things before us and had lighted cigars, we could all see in the blue curls of smoke that rose before us visions of our past lives. I asked one of my friends, "How long have you been on the road, Billy?"

"Good Lord!" he yawned, "I haven't thought of that for a long time, but I sure do remember when I first started out. I left St. Louis one Sunday night on the Missouri Pacific. It was nearly twenty years ago. I remember it very well because that night I read in a newspaper that there was such a thing as a phonograph and, as I was traveling through Missouri, I didn't believe it. I had to wait until I could see one. The next day noon I struck Falls City, Nebraska. It had taken me eighteen hours to make the trip. To me it seemed as if I were going into a new world and I was surprised to find, when I reached Nebraska, that men way out there wore about the same sort of clothes that they did in St. Louis. I would not have been surprised a bit if some Indian had come out of the bushes and tried to scalp me. The depot was a mile and a half from the hotel. Here I took my first ride in an omnibus. The inside of that old bus, the red−cushioned seats and the advertisements of a livery stable, a hardware store, and "Little Jake's Tailor Shop" were all new to me. Mud? I never saw mud so deep in my life. It took us an hour to get up town. The little white hotel with the green shutters on it was one of the best I ever struck in my life. Many a time since then I have wished I could have carried it— the good friend, chicken and all—along with me in all my travels. My best friend and adviser, an old road man himself, had told me this: 'When you get to a town, get up your trunks and open them and then go and see the trade. You might just as well hunt quail with your shells in your pocket as to try to do business without your samples open.'

"I opened up that afternoon. It took me three hours. I put my samples in good shape so that I knew where to lay my hands on anything that a customer might ask for—and you know if you go out to sell anything you'd better know what you have to sell! My samples open, I went down the street and fell into the first store I came to. The proprietor had been an old customer of the house, but I now know that the reason he gave me the ice pitcher was that he had been slow in paying his bills and the house had drawn on him. A wise thing, this, for a house to do —when they want to lose a customer! This was a heart−breaker to me right at the start, but it was lucky, because, if I had sold him, I would have packed up and gone away without working the town. A man on the road, you know, boys, even if he doesn't do business with them, should form the acquaintance of all the men in the town who

handle his line. The old customer may drop dead, sell out, or go broke, and it is always well to have somebody else in line. Of course there are justifiable exceptions to this rule, but in general I would say: 'Know as many as you can who handle your line.'

"After the old customer turned me down I went into every store in that town and told my business. I found two out of about six who said they would look at my goods. By this time everybody had closed up and I came back to the hotel and went to bed, having spent the first day without doing any business.

"Five men from my house in this same territory had fallen down in five years and I, a kid almost, was number six—but not to fall down! I said to myself, 'I am going to succeed.' The will to win means a whole lot in this road business, too, boys. You know, if you go at a thing half−heartedly you are sure to lose out, but if you say 'I will,' you cannot fall down.

"Next morning I was up early and, before the clerks had dusted off the counters, I went in to see the old gentleman who had said he would look at my goods.

"'Round pretty early, aren't you, son?' said the old gentleman.

"'Yes, sir; but I'm after the worm,' said I.

"'All right. Go up to your hotel and I'll be there in half an hour.'

"Instead of waiting until he was ready for me, I went to the hotel. After the half hour was up I began to get nervous. It was an hour and a half before he came. I hadn't then learned that the best way to do is to go with your customer from his store to yours, instead of sitting around and waiting for him to come to you. This gives him a chance to get out of the notion.

"I sold the old gentleman a pretty fair bill of hats, but it was sort of a hit and miss proposition. He would jump from this thing to that thing. I hadn't learned that the real way to sell goods is to lay out one line at a time and finish with that before going to another. Pretty soon, though, good merchants educated me how to sell a bill. This is a thing a beginner should be taught something about before he starts out.

"Customer No. 2 was a poke. But I suppose this was the reason I sold him, because most of the boys, I afterwards learned, passed him up and had nicknamed him 'Old Sorgum−in−the−Winter.' It is a pretty good idea to let a slow man have his way, anyhow, if you have plenty of time, because when you are selling goods in dozen lots, no matter how slow a man is, you can get in a pretty good day's work in a few hours.

"When I got through with 'Old Sorgum' I had several hours left before my train went west. Did I pack up and quit? Bet your life not! I didn't have sense enough then, I suppose, to know that I had placed my goods in about as many stores as I ought to. I then did the 'bundle act.'

"I did up a bunch of stuff in a cloth and went down the street with the samples under my arm. I did have sense enough, though, to tuck them under my coat as I passed by the store of the man I had sold. I didn't know, then, of the business jealousy—which is folly, you know —there is between merchants; but I felt a little guilty just the same.

The only thing I sold, however, was a dozen dog−skin gloves to the big clothing merchant on the corner. That night I took the two o'clock train out of town and had my first experience of sleeping in two beds in two towns in one night—but this, in those days, was fun for me.

"Do you know, I had a bully good week? I was out early that season, ahead of the bunch. By Saturday afternoon I had worked as far west as Wymore. I went up to see a man there on Saturday afternoon. He said, 'I'll see you in the morning.' Well, there I was! I had been raised to respect the Sabbath and between the time that he said he would see me in the morning and the time that I said all right—which was about a jiffy—I figured out that it would be better to succeed doing business on Sunday than to fail by being too offensively good. For a stranger in a strange place work is apt to be less mischievous than idling, even on the Sabbath Day.

"Heavens! how I worked those days! After I had made the appointment for Sunday morning I went back to the hotel and threw my stuff into my trunks quickly—by this time I had learned that to handle samples in a hurry is one of the necessary arts of the road—and took a train to a little nearby town which I could double into without losing any time. I even had the nerve to drag a man over to my sample room after he had closed up on Saturday night! I didn't sell him anything that time, but afterwards he became one of my best customers. It pays to keep hustling, you know.

"Whew! how cold it was that night. The train west left at 3 a.m. Heavens! how cold my room was. A hardware man had never even slept in it, to say nothing of its ever having known a stove. The windows had whiskers on

them long as a billy goat's; the mattress was one of those thin boys. I hadn't then learned that the cold can come through the mattress under you just about as fast as it can through the quilts on top. I hadn't got onto the lamp chimney trick."

"Why, what's that?" spoke up one of the boys.

"Aren't you onto that?" said Billy. "You can take a lamp chimney, wrap it up in a towel and put it at your feet and it will make your whole bed as warm as toast.

"Well, I went back to Wymore the next morning and sold my man. I cut the stuffing out of prices because I had been told that the firm he bought from was the best going, and I remembered the advice that my old friend had given me: 'It's better, Billy, to be cussed for selling goods cheap than to be fired for not selling them at all.' Of course I don't agree with this now, but I slashed that bill just the same.

"Next morning, when I reached Beatrice, the first thing I saw in the old hotel (I still recall that dead, musty smell) was a church directory hanging on the wall. In the center of the directory were printed these words:

"'A Sabbath well spent brings a week of content
And plenty of health for the morrow;
But a Sabbath profaned, no matter what gained,
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow.'

"Down in the corner, where the glass was broken, one of the boys who had without doubt profaned the Sabbath, had written these words:

"'A man who's thrifty on Sunday's worth fifty
Of a half−sanctimonious duck;
He will get along well if he does go to dwell
Where he'll chew on Old Satan's hot chuck.'

"My business the week before had been simply out of sight. The old man in the house wrote me the only congratulatory letter I ever got from him in my life. He was so well pleased with what I had done that he didn't kick very hard even on the bill that I had slashed. But that next week—oh, my! I didn't sell enough to buy honeysuckles for a humming bird. I began to think that maybe that Sunday bill had 'queered' me."

"But how about Sunday now, Bill?" spoke up one of the boys. "Do you think you'd like to take a good fat order to−morrow?"

"Yes, I've grown not to mind it out in this country," said Billy. "You know we've a saying out here that the Lord has never come west of Cheyenne."

"I shall never forget my first experience," said my old friend Jim, as we all lighted fresh cigars—having forgotten the Dutch pictures and the black oak furnishings.

"I had made a little flyer for the house to pick up a bill of opening stock out in Iowa. They all thought in the office that the bill wasn't worth going after, so they sent me; but I landed a twenty−five hundred dollar order without slashing an item, a thing no other salesman up to that time had ever done, so the old man called me in the office and gave me a job just as soon as I came back.

"I started out with two hundred dollars expense money. The roll of greenbacks the cashier handed me looked as big as a bale of hay. I made a couple of towns the first two days and did business in both of them, keeping up the old lick of not cutting a price.

"The next town I was booked for was Broken Bow, which was then off the main line of the 'Q,' and way up on a branch. To get there I had to go to Grand Island. Now, you boys remember the mob that used to hang out around the hotel at Grand Island. That was the time when there were a lot of poker sharks on the road. When I was a bill clerk in Chicago I used to meet with some of the other boys from the store on Saturday nights, play penny ante, five−cent limit, and settle for twenty−five cents on the dollar when we got through—I was with a clothing firm, you know. I had always been rather lucky and I had it in my head that I could buck up against anybody in a poker game. I had no trouble finding company to sit in with. In fact, they looked me up. In those days there were plenty of glass bowls full of water setting 'round for suckers. My train didn't leave until Monday morning and I had to Sunday at Grand Island.

"We started in on Saturday night and played all night long. By the time we had breakfast—and this we had sent up to the room—I was out about forty dollars. I wanted to quit them and call it off. I thought this was about as much as I could stand to lose and 'cover' in my expense account, but all of the old sharks said, 'By jove, you

have got nerve, Jim. You have the hardest run of luck in drawing cards that I ever saw.' They doped me up with the usual words of praise and, after I had put a cup of coffee or two under my belt, I went at it again, making up my mind that I could stand to lose another ten. I figured out that I could make a team trip and 'break a wheel' to even up on expenses.

"Well, you know what that means. The time for you to quit a poker game (when you have money in your pocket) is like to−morrow—it never comes. By nightfall I was dead broke. Then I began to think. I felt like butting my brains out against a lamp−post; but that wouldn't do. I ate supper all alone and went to thinking what I'd do.

"I wasn't a kitten, by any means, so I went up to my shark friends and struck one of them for enough to carry me up to Broken Bow and back. He was a big winner and came right up with the twenty. They wanted to let me in the game again on 'tick,' but then I had sense enough to know that I'd had plenty. I went to my room and wrote the house. I simply made a clean breast of the whole business. I told them the truth about the matter—that I'd acted the fool—and I promised them I'd never do it any more; and I haven't played a game of poker since. The old man of the house had wired me money to Grand Island by the time I returned there and in the first mail he wrote me to keep right on.

"Business was bum with me for the next three days. I didn't sell a cent. One of the boys tipped me on an Irishman down in Schuyler who had had a squabble with his clothing house. I saw a chance right there and jumped right into that town. I got the man to look at my goods. He looked them all through from A to Z, but I couldn't start that Hibernian to save my life.

"He said, 'Well, your line looks pretty good; but, heavens alive! your prices are away too high.' Then he said, picking up a coat: 'Look here, young man, you're new on the road and I want to figure out and show you that you're getting too much for your goods. Now, you put down there, here is a suit that you ask me $12 for. Just figure the cloth and the linings, and the buttons, and the work. All told they don't cost you people over seven dollars. You ought to be able to—and you can—make me this suit for $10. That's profit enough. You can't expect to do business with us people out here in Nebraska and hold us up. We're not in the backwoods. People are civilized out here. Your house has figured that we're Indians, or something of that kind. You know very well that they sell this same suit in Illinois, where competition is greater, for ten dollars. Now I won't stand for any high prices like you're asking me. I'm going to quit the old firm that I've been buying goods from. I've got onto them. Now I'm going to give my business to somebody and you're here on the spot. Your goods suit me as far as pattern and make and general appearance go, and I'll do business with you, and do it right now, if you'll do it on the right sort of basis.'

"Well, there I was. I hadn't sold a bill for three days and I felt that this one was slipping right away from me, too. I had come especially to see the man and he had told me that he would buy goods from me if I would make the price right. So I lit in to cut. I sold him the twelve dollar suit for ten dollars. He took a dozen of them. It was a staple. I didn't know anything about what the goods were worth, but he had made his bluff good. I sold him the bill right through at cut prices on everything. The house actually lost money on the bill. I have long since learned that the only way to meet a bluffer is with a bluff. This man had laid out a line of goods which he fully intended, I know now, to buy from me at the prices which I had first asked him for them, but he thought he would buy them cheaper from me if he could.

"Many a time after that, when I had got onto things better, has this old Irishman laughed at me about how he worked me into giving him a bill of goods, and enjoyed the joke of it—Irishmanlike—more, I believe, than he did getting the bill at low prices.

"Well, my nerve was gone and I thought the only way I could do business then was by cutting the stuffing out of prices. I kept it up for a few days—until I received my next mail at Omaha. Whew! how the old man did pour it into me. He wrote me the meanest letter that a white man ever got. He said: 'Jim, you can go out and play all the poker that you want to, but don't cut the life out of goods. You can lose a hundred and fifty dollars once in a while, if you want to, playing cards, that will be a whole lot better than losing a hundred and fifty every day by not getting as much as goods are worth. Now we're going to forget about the hundred and fifty dollars you lost gambling, instead of charging it to your salary account, as you told us to do. We had made up our minds because you were starting out so well and were keeping up prices, to charge this hundred and fifty dollars to your expense account. We were going to forget all about that, Jim; but if you can't get better prices than you have been for the last week, just take the train and come right on in to the house. We can't afford to keep you out on the road and

lose money on you;' and so on.

"I was scared to death. I didn't know that the Old Man in the house was running a bigger bluff on me than the Irishman to whom I made cut prices on the bill.

"But that letter gave me my nerve back and I ended up with a pretty fair trip. At that time I hadn't learned that this road business is done on confidence more than on knowledge. A salesman must feel first within himself that his goods and prices are right, and then he can sell them at those prices. If you feel a thing yourself you can make the other man feel it, especially when he doesn't know anything about the values of the goods he buys.

"When I reached the house one of the boys in stock patted me on the back and said; 'Jim, the old man is tickled to death about what you've done. He says you're making better profits for him than any man in the house.'"

"Well, I guess you held your job, all right, then, didn't you, Jim?"

"Oh my, yes. I stayed with them—that was my old firm, you know—for fifteen years, and I was a fool for ever leaving them. I would have been a partner in the house to−day if I hadn't switched off."

"How long have you been out, Arthur?" said my friend Jim, after ending his story.

"Well, so long that I've almost forgotten it, boys, but I shall never forget my start, either. The firm that I worked for had a wholesale business, and they were also interested in a retail store. I was stock man in the retail house but I wasn't satisfied with it. I was crazy to go out and try my luck on the road. I braced the old man several times before he would let me start; but he finally said to me: 'Well, Arthur, you're mighty anxious to go out on the road, and I guess we'll let you go. It won't do much harm because I think that, after a little bit, you will want to get back to your old job. Then you'll be satisfied with it. I kind o' feel, though, that in sending you out we'll be spoiling a good retail clerk to make a poor traveling man. You've done pretty well selling gloves a pair at a time to people who come in and ask for them, but you're going to have a good deal harder time when you go to selling a dozen at a clip to a man who hasn't been in the habit of buying them from you. But, as you're bent on going, we'll start you out this season. You can get yourself ready to go right away.'

"My territory was Iowa. In the first town I struck was the meanest merchant I've ever met in my life. But I didn't know it then. He was one of the kind who'd tell you with a grunt that he would not go to your sample room but if you had a few good sellers to bring them over and he'd look at them. The old hog! Then about the time you'd get your stuff over to his store something would have turned up to make him hot and he'd take out his spite on you.

"Well, this old duck said he'd look at my samples of unlined goods. I rather thought that if I could get him started on unlined goods I could sell him on lined stuff and mittens. So I lugged over my whole line myself. I didn't have sense enough to give the porter a quarter to carry my grip over to his store and save my energy, but, instead, I picked up the old grip myself. It was all right for the first block, but then I had to sit down and rest. The store was four blocks away. On the home stretch I couldn't go twenty steps before I had to sit down and rest. It was so heavy that it almost pulled the cords in my wrist in two. When I finally landed the grip at the front of the old man's store, my tongue was hanging out. He had then gone to dinner.

"I thought I wouldn't eat anything but that I would get my line ready for him by the time he came back, get through with him and take luncheon later. I carried the grip to the back end of the store and spread out my line on the counter. About one o'clock he came in and I said to him, 'I'm ready for you.' He walked away and didn't say a word but took out a newspaper and read for half an hour. He did it for pure meanness, for not a single customer came into the store while he sat there.

"I was beginning to get a little hungry but I didn't mind that then. When the young lady on the dry goods side came back from dinner I sidled up to her and talked about the weather for another half hour. My stomach was beginning to gnaw but I didn't dare go out. The old man by this time had gone to his desk and was writing some letters. I waited until I saw him address an envelope and put a stamp on it, and then I braced him a second time.

"'No, I guess I don't want any gloves.'

"'Well, I've my goods all here and it'll be no trouble to show them to you,' I said.

"'Nope,' said he, and then started to write another letter.

"When he finished that one, I said: 'Now, I don't like to insist but as my goods are all here it won't do any harm to look at them.'

"With this the old man turned on me and said:

"'Looker here, young man, I've told you twict that I don't want to buy any of your goods. Now, you just get them in your grip and get them out of here right quick; if you don't I'll throw them out and you with them.'

"Well, the old duffer was a little bigger than I was, and I didn't want to get into any trouble with him; not that I cared anything about having a scrap with him, but I thought that the firm wouldn't like it, and if they got onto me they'd fire me. So, without saying a word, I began to pack my goods together.

"About that time a customer came in who wanted to buy a pair of shoes. Some of my samples were still on the counter near the shoe shelves. The old man, with a sweep of his hand, just cleaned the counter of my samples and there I was, picking them up off the floor and putting them into my grip. I felt like hitting him over the head with a nail puller but I buckled up the straps and started sliding the grip along,—it was so infernally heavy—to the front door.

"Before I got to the front door, he came up and took the grip out of my hand and piled it out on the sidewalk and gave me a shove. Then he went back to show the customer the pair of shoes.

"I was just a boy then—was just nineteen—and this was the first man I'd called on.

"'If they're all like this,' thought I to myself, 'I believe I'll go back home and sell them a pair at a time to the boys I know who "come in" for them.'

"I lugged that grip back to the hotel, hungry as I was. There was ice on the sidewalk but I was sweating like a mule pulling a bob−tailed street car full of fat folks. I was almost famished but I went to my room and cried like a child. My heart was broken.

[Illustration: "My stomach was beginning to gnaw, but i didn't dare go out"]

"But after awhile my nerve came back to me, and I thought, surely all the merchants I call on won't be like that man,—and I washed up and went down to supper. After eating something I felt better. At the supper table I told an old traveling man, who was sitting at the table with me, about the way I'd been treated.

"'Well, come on, my boy, and I'll sell you a bill tonight. That old fellow is the meanest dog in Iowa. No decent traveling man will go near him. As a rule, you'll find that merchants will treat you like a gentleman. The best thing you can do is to scratch that old whelp off the list. Of course you know,' said he, giving me advice which I needed very much, 'you'll often run up against a man who is a little sour, but if you sprinkle sugar on him in the right kind of way, you can sweeten him up.'

"You know how it is, boys, even now, all of us like to give a helping hand to the young fellow who's just starting out. I would almost hand over one of my customers to a young man to give him encouragement, and so would you. We've all been up against the game ourselves and know how many things the young fellow runs up against to dishearten him.

"As I think of my early experiences, I recall with a great deal of gratitude in my heart the kind deeds that were done for me when I was the green first−tripper, by the old timers on the road. My new friend took me down the street to one of his customers and made him give me an order. That night I went to bed the happiest boy in Iowa."

With this one of the boys called a waiter. As we lit our cigars my friend Moore, who was next to tell his story, said, "Well, boys, here's to Our First Experiences."

CHAPTER VIII. TACTICS IN SELLING.

The man on the road is an army officer. His soldiers are his samples. His enemy is his competitor. He fights battles every day. The "spoils of war" is business.

The traveling man must use tactics just the same as does the general. He may not have at stake the lives of other men and the success of his country; but he does have at stake—and every day—his own livelihood, a chance for promotion—a partnership perhaps—and always, the success of his firm.

Many are the turns the salesman takes to get business. He must be always ready when his eyes are open, and sometimes in his dreams, to wage war. If he is of the wrong sort, once in a while he will give himself up to sharp practice with his customer; another time he will fight shrewdly against his competitor. Sometimes he must cajole the man who wishes to do business with him and at the same time, especially when his customer's credit is none too good, make it easy for him to get goods shipped; and, hardest of all, he must get the merchant's attention that he may show him his wares. Get a merchant to looking at your goods and you usually sell a bill.

In the smoking room of a Pullman one night sat a bunch of the boys who, as is usual with them when they get together, were telling of their experiences. The smoker is the drummer's club−room when he is on a trip. On every train every night are told tales of the road which, if they were put in type, would make a book of compelling interest. The life of the traveling man has such variety, such a change of scene, that a great deal more comes into it than mere buy and sell. Yes, on this night of which I speak, the stories told were about tussles that my friends had had to get business.

As the train rounded a sharp curve, one of the boys, who was standing, bumped his head against the door post. A New York hat man who saw the "broken bonnet," said, "Your cracked cady reminds me of one time when I sold a bill of goods that pleased me, I believe, more than any other order that I ever took. I was over in the mining district of Michigan. That's a pretty wide open country, you know. My old customer had quit the town. He couldn't make a 'stick' of it somehow. I had been selling him exclusively for so long that I thought I was queered with every other merchant in the town. But the season after my customer Hodges left there, much to my surprise, two men wrote into the house saying they would like to buy my goods. My stuff had always given Hodges' customers satisfaction. After he left, his old customers drifted into other stores and asked for my brand. Now, if you can only get a merchant's customers to asking for a certain brand of goods, you aren't going to have trouble in doing business with him. This is where the wholesale firm that sells reliable merchandise wins out over the one that does a cut−throat business. Good stuff satisfies and it builds business.

"Well, when I went into this town I thought I would have easy sailing but I felt a little taken back when I walked down the street and sized up the stores of the merchants who wished to buy my goods. They both looked to me like tid bits. Both of them were new in the town, one of them having moved into Hodges' old stand. I said to myself that I didn't wish to do business with either one of these pikers. 'I'll see if I can't go over and square myself with Andrews, the biggest man in town,' I said. 'While I've never tried to do business with him, he can't have anything against me. I've always gone over and been a good fellow with him, so I'll see if I can't get him lined up.'

"Three or four more of the boys had come in with me on the same train. When I went into Andrews' store, two of them were in there. Pretty soon afterwards I heard one of them say: 'Well, Andy, as you want to get away in the morning, I'll fall in after you close up. It'll suit me all the better to do business with you tonight.' Andrews spoke up and said, 'All right, eight o'clock goes.'

"This man saw that I had come in to see him and, having made his engagement, knew enough to get out of the way. The boys, you know, especially the old timers, are mighty good about this. I don't believe the outsiders anyway know much about the fellowship among us.

"The other man who was in the store was out on his first trip. He was selling suspenders. It was then, say, half past five. I joshed with the boys in the store for a few minutes. Andrews, meantime, had gone up to his office to look over his mail and get off some rush letters. The new man, who sold suspenders, was a good fellow but he had lots to learn. He trailed right along after Andrews as if he had been a dog led by a string. He stood around up in the office for a few minutes without having anything to say. Had he been an old−timer, you know, he would have made his speech and then moved out of the way. After a few minutes he came down and said to me, 'That fellow's

a tough proposition. I can't get hold of him. I can't find out whether he wants to look at my goods or not. He joshes with me but I can't get him down to say that he will look. I don't know whether I ought to have my trunks brought up and fool with him or not.'

"'Let me tell you one thing, my boy,' said I, 'if you want to do business, get your stuff up and do it quickly. If he doesn't come to look at your goods, bring 'em in. Bring 'em in. Go after him that way.'

"'All right, I guess I will,' said he, and out he went.

"As soon as Andrews came down from his office, I said 'Hello,' but before I could put in a word about business, in came a customer to look at a shirt. Well, sir, that fellow jawed over that four−bit shirt for half an hour. I'd gladly have given him half a dozen dollar−and−a− half shirts if he would only get out of my way and give me a chance to talk business. Just about the time that Andrews wrapped up the shirt, back came the new man again, having had his trunks brought up to the hotel. I knew then that my cake was all dough. So I skipped out, saying I would call in after supper. I felt then that, as Andrews was going away the next morning, I wouldn't get a chance at him so, being in the town, I thought the best thing to do was to go over and pick up one of the other fellows who was anxious to buy from me.

"I went over to see the man who had taken Hodges' old stand. As soon as I went in he said: 'Yes, I want some goods. I have just started in here. I haven't much in the store but I'm doing first rate and am going to stock up. When can I see you? It would suit me a good deal better tonight after eight o'clock than any other time. I haven't put on a clerk yet and am here all alone. If you like, we'll get right at it and take sizes on what stock we have. Then you can get your supper and see me at eight o'clock and I'll be ready for you. I want to buy a pretty fair order. I've had a bully good hat trade this season. I've been sending mail orders into your house—must have bought over four hundred dollars from, them in the last three months. I s'pose you got credit for it all right.'

"Well, this was news to me. The house hadn't written me anything about having received the mail orders and I'll say right here, that the firm that doesn't keep their salesmen fully posted about what's going on in his territory makes a great big mistake. If I'd known that this man had been buying so many goods, I wouldn't have overlooked him. As it was, I came very near passing up the town. And I'll tell you another thing: A man never wants to overlook what may seem to him a small bet. This fellow gave me that night over seven hundred dollars—a pretty clean bill in hats, you know, and has made me a first−class customer and we have become good friends.

"But I'm getting a little ahead of my story! After supper, that night, I dropped into Andrews' store again. The suspender man was still there. He had taken my tip and brought in some of his samples. While Andrews was over at the dry goods side for a few minutes, the suspender man said to me:

"'I don't believe I can sell this fellow. He says he wants to buy some suspenders but that mine don't strike him somehow—says they're too high prices. I've cut a $2.25 suspender to $1.90 but that doesn't seem to satisfy him, and I'll give you a tip, too—you've been so kind to me—I heard him say to his buyer that he wasn't going to look you over. He said to let you come around a few times and leave some of your money in the town, and then maybe he'd do business with you. I just thought I'd tell you this so that you'd know how you stood and not lose any time over it.'

"'Thank you very much,' I said. Now, this sort of thing, you know, makes you whet your Barlow on your boot leg. I did thank the suspender man for the tip but I made up my mind that I was going to do business with Andrews anyway. You know there's lots more fun shooting quail flying in the brush than to pot−hunt them in a fence corner.

"After I'd sold my other man that night, I sat down in the office of the hotel. Andrews was still in the sample room, just behind the office, looking over goods. I knew he'd have to pass out that way, so I sat down to wait for him. It was getting pretty late but I knew that he was a night−hawk and if he got interested he would stay up until midnight looking at goods. After a little bit out came Andrews, his buyer and my other traveling man friend. He asked me up with them to have cigars. He was wise. Only that morning we'd had to double up together in a sample room in the last town. We were pretty much crowded but were going to 'divvy' on the space. The boys, you know, are mighty good about this sort of thing; but when I went down the street I learned that my man was out of town—I sold only one man in that place. So I went right back up to the sample room and rolled my trunks out of his way so that my friend could have the whole thing to himself. There's no use being a hog, you know. This didn't hurt me any, and it was as much on account of this as anything else that I was asked up to take a cigar where I could get in a word with Andrews.

"As the clerk was passing out the cigars, Andrews took off his hat. As he dropped it on the cigar case, he rubbed his hand over his head and said, 'Gee! but I've got a headache!'

"I picked up his hat. Quick as a flash I saw my chance. It was from my competitor's house. I could feel, in a second, that it was a poor one. Getting the brim between my fingers, I said to Andrews, 'Why, you shouldn't get the headache by wearing such a good hat as this. Why, this is a splendid piece of goods!'

"With this, I tore a slit in the brim as easily as if it had been blotting paper. Then I gave the brim a few more turns, ripping it clear off the crown. In a minute or two I tore up the brim and made it look like black pasteboard checkers.

"'The cigars are on me!' said Andrews, as everybody around gave him the laugh.

"I went up to my room soon leaving Andrews that night to wear his brimless hat. But I knew then that I could get his attention when I wanted it, next morning, about nine o'clock,—for my train and his left at 11:30. This would give plenty of time to do business with him if we had any business to do, as he was a quick buyer when you got him interested. I went into his store with two hats in my hand. They were good clear Nutrias and just the size that Andrews wore. I'd found this out by looking at his hat the night before.

"'I don't want to do any business with you, Andrews,' said I, 'but I'm not such a bad fellow, you know, and I want to square up things with you a little. Take one of these.'

"The hats were 'beauts.' Andrews went to the mirror and put on one and then the other. He finally said, 'I guess I'll hang onto the brown one. By Jove, these are daisies, old man!'

"'Yes,' said I, striking as quickly as a rattlesnake, 'and there are lots more where these came from! Now, look here, Andrews, you know mighty well that my line of stuff is a lot better than the one that you're buying from. If you think more of the babies of the man you are buying your hats from than you do of your own, stay right here; but if you don't, get Jack, your buyer, and come up with me right now. I'm going out on the 11:30 train.' This line of talk will knock out the friendship argument when nothing else will.

"'Guess I'll go you one, old man,' said Andrews.

"He bought a good sized bill and, as I left him on the train where I changed cars, he said, 'Well, good luck to you. I guess you'd better just duplicate that order I gave you, for my other store.'"

"That," spoke up one of the boys, "is what I call salesmanship. You landed the man that didn't want to buy your goods. The new man let him slip off his hook when he really wanted to buy suspenders."

"I once landed a $3,400 bill up in Wisconsin," said a clothing man as we lighted fresh cigars, "in a funny way. I'd been calling on an old German clothing merchant for a good many years, but I could never get him interested. I went into his store one morning and got the usual stand−off. I asked him if he wouldn't come over and just look at my goods, that I could save him money and give him a prettier line of patterns and neater made stuff than he was buying.

"'Ach! Dat's de sonk dey all sink,' said the old German. 'I'm sotisfite mit de line I haf. Sell 'em eesy und maig a goot brofit. Vat's de use uf chanching anyvay, alretty?'

[Illustration: In big headlines I read, "GREAT FIRE IN CHICAGO."]

"I'd been up against this argument so many times with him that I knew there was no use of trying to buck up against it any more, so I started to leave the store. The old man, although he turned me down every time I went there, would always walk with me to the front door and give me a courteous farewell. In came a boy with a Chicago paper just as we were five steps from the door. What do you suppose stared me in the face? In big head lines I read: GREAT FIRE IN CHICAGO in big type. The paper also stated that flames were spreading toward my house. I at once excused myself and went down to the telegraph office to wire my house exactly where I was so that they could let me know what to do. As I passed to the operator the telegram I wrote, he said, 'Why, Mr. Leonard, I've just sent a boy up to the hotel with a message for you. There he is! Call him back!' The wire was from the house stating, 'Fire did us only little damage. Keep right on as if nothing had happened.'

"My samples were all opened up and I had to wait several hours for a train anyway, so an idea struck me. 'I believe I'll fake a telegram and see if I can't work my old German friend with it.' I wrote out a message to myself, 'All garments on the second floor are steam heated. They are really uninjured but we will collect insurance on them. Sell cheap.'

"Armed with this telegram I walked into the old German's store again. 'Enny noos?' said he.

"'Yes; here's a telegram I've just received,' said I, handing over the fake message.

"'Sdeam heatet,' said the old man, 'Vell dey gan be bresst oud, nicht? Veil, I look ad your goots.'

"He dropped in right after dinner. I had laid out on one side of the sample room a line of second floor goods.

"Among them were a lot of old frocks that the house was very anxious to get rid of. When I got back to the old man's store, he was pacing the floor waiting for me to come. He had on his overcoat ready to go with me.

"'Vell,' said he, before giving me a chance to speak, 'I go right down mit you.'

"He was the craziest buyer I ever saw. It didn't take me more than twenty minutes to sell the $3,400."

"But how did you get on afterwards?" asked one of the boys.

"Don't speak of it," said Leonard. "The joke was so good that I gave it away to one of the boys after the bill had been shipped, and do you know, the old man got onto me and returned a big part of the bill. Of course, you know I've never gone near him since. Retribution, I suppose! That cured me of sharp tricks."

"A sharp game doesn't work out very well when you play it on your customer," spoke up one of the boys who sold bonds, "but it's all right to mislead your competitor once in a while, especially if he tries to find out things from you that he really hasn't any business to know. I was once over in Indiana. I had on me a pretty good line of six per cents. They were issued by a well−to−do little town out West. You know, western bonds are really A−1 property, but the people in the East haven't yet got their eyes open to the value of property west of the Rockies.

"Well; when I reached this town, one of my friends tipped me onto one of my competitors who, he said, was going to be in that same town that afternoon. There were three prospective customers for us and we were both in the habit of going after the same people. Two of them were bankers,—one of them was pretty long winded; the other was a retired grain dealer who lived about a mile out of town. He was the man I really wished to go after. His name was Reidy and he was quite an old gentleman, always looking for a little inside on everything. I didn't wish to waste much time on the bankers before I'd taken a crack at the old man. I knew he'd just cashed in on some other bonds that he had bought from my firm and that he was probably open for another deal. I merely went over and shook hands with the bankers. One of them—the long winded one—asked me if I had a certain bond. I told him I didn't think I had,—that I'd 'phone in and find out. I got on the line with my old grain dealer friend and he said he'd be in town right after dinner. I would have gone out to see him but he preferred doing his business in town. By this time I knew my competitor would reach town so I ate dinner early and took chances on his still being in the dining room when Reidy would drive in. I knew that my competitor, if he got into town, would go right after the old gentleman just as quickly as he could.

"After dinner I sat down out in the public square smoking, and apparently taking the world at ease,—but I was fretting inside to beat the band! My competitor saw me from the hotel porch. He came over and shook hands—you know we're always ready to cut each other's throats but we do it with a smile and always put out the glad hand.

"'Well, Woody,' said he, 'you seem to be taking the world easy. Business must have been good this week.'

"'Oh, fair,' I answered,—but it had really been rotten for several days.

"'Come and eat,' said he.

"'No, thanks, I've just been in. I'll see you after. I'll finish my cigar.'

"My competitor went in to dinner. About the time I knew he was getting along toward pie, I began to squirm. I lighted two or three matches and let them go out before I fired up my cigar. Still no Reidy had shown up. Pretty soon out came my competitor over into the park where I was. I knew that if he got his eyes on Reidy I would have to scramble for the old man's coin. So I managed to get him seated with his back toward the direction from which Reidy would come to town. The old man always drove a white horse. As I talked to my competitor I kept looking up the road—I could see for nearly half a mile—for that old white horse.

"'Well, have you left anything in town for me, Woody,' said he directly.

"About that time I saw the old man's horse jogging slowly but surely toward us.

"'Well, now, I'll tell you,' I said to him, 'I believe that if you'll go over to the bank just around the corner, you can do some business. I was in there this morning and they asked me for a certain kind of paper that I haven't any left of. If you can scare up something of that kind, I think you can do some business with them there. I'll take you over, if you like.'

"I didn't want him to turn around because I knew that he, too, would see that old white horse and that I'd never get him to budge an inch until he had spoken with Reidy if he did,—and the old horse was coming trot! trot! trot!—closer every minute.

"'Well, say, that'll be good of you. I hate to leave you out here all alone resting and doing nothing,' said he.

"'Oh, that's all right. Come on,'—and with this I took him by the arm in a very friendly manner, keeping his back toward that old white horse, and walked him around the corner to the bank where I knew that he would be out of sight when the old man reached the public square.

"Just as I came around the corner after leaving my competitor Richards in the bank, there came plodding along the old man. Luckily he went down about a block to hitch his horse. I met him as he was coming back and carried him up to my room in the hotel. I laid my proposition before him and he said:

"'Well, that looks pretty good to me, but I'd like to go over here to the bank and talk to one of my friends there and see what he thinks of the lay−out.'

"'Which bank?' thought I. Well, as luck would have it, it was the other bank. 'Very well,' I said, 'I'll drop over there myself in a few minutes and have the papers all with me. We can fix the matter up over there. I'm sure the people in the bank will give this their hearty endorsement.'

"As the old man walked across the park, two or three people met him and stopped him. My heart was thumping away because, even though the banker around the corner was long winded, it was about time for him to get through with Richards; but the old man went into the bank all right before Richards came out. Then I went over and sat down in the park. In a few minutes Richards came over where I was.

[Illustration: "Well, Woody," said he, "you seem to be taking the world pretty easy."]

"'Say, that was a good tip you gave me, Woody, I think I'll be able to do some business all right. I want to run into the hotel a few minutes, if you'll excuse me, and get into my grip. Say; but you're taking things easy! I wish I could get along as well as you do without worrying.'

"Richards left me and went into the hotel. I wanted to get him off as quickly as I could because I didn't know but that, any minute, the old gentleman would come out of the bank door. I hit a pretty lively pace to get in where he was. By that time, he had investigated my bonds and found that he wanted them. I took his check and gave him a receipt for it, and then walked with him over to where his horse was. I wanted to get him out of town as quickly as I could and keep my competitor from seeing him, if possible.

"Well, sir, everything worked smooth as a charm. As the old man's buggy was just crossing the bridge, out came Richards from the hotel. I was again sitting in the park.

"'Heavens! you're taking it easy,' said he to me. 'How is it the firm can afford to pay you to go around these towns, sit in parks and smoke cigars, Woody?'

"'Oh, a man has to take a lay−off once in a while,' said I.

"I went over to the bank where the old man had been, and in a few minutes sold them some bonds. Then I came out and again sat down in the park a few minutes, waiting for Richards to get through so that I could go and see the other people where he was dickering. Pretty soon he came out and he was swearing mad. He said, 'I've been wrangling with these people for a couple of hours and I can't get them into anything to save my life. I might just as well have been out here with you all this time, taking the world easy, for all the good I've done.'

"'Well, I guess I'll go over and take a crack at them again,' said I.

"'All right. Go ahead. I guess I'll skip the town,' but he didn't do a thing but get on the trolley which passed out by old man Reidy's house, where he was, of course, too late. I went in where he had not been able to do business, and, now that my mind was easy, I took plenty of time and made a nice sale in there, too.

"About a week afterwards I met Richards, and he said, 'Well, Woody, you've got one coming on me. You weren't so idle as I thought all the time you were out there in the park.'"

"First call for dinner in the dining car," drawled out the white− aproned darkey as Woody finished his story.

"Boys, shall we all go in?" said Woody.

"I'm not very hungry," spoke up Leonard, "I took luncheon pretty late today. I think I'll wait a little bit unless you all are in a hurry."

"You know what you were telling me about running your competitor into a bank around the corner," spoke up a necktie man, "goes to show this: That you must have a man's attention before you can do business with him. I really believe that your friend, Woody, would have done business if he hadn't struck his man at the busy time of day. I know that I can usually do business if I get a man when his mind is easy and I can get him to look at my goods.

"But I bumped into the hardest proposition the other day that I've put my shoulder against for a long time.

There's a merchant that I call on, over near Duluth, that is the hardest man to get into a sample room I ever saw. I have been calling on him for several seasons but I couldn't get him away from the store. Once he had a clerk that stole from him and after he got onto this fellow he never leaves the store unless one of his own sons is right there to take his place. Even then, he doesn't like to go out, and he only does so to run up home and back right quickly for a bite to eat. I had sold him a few little jags by lugging stuff in and was getting tired of this sort of business. I wanted either to get a decent order or quit him cold. It is all very good, you know, to send in one or two little jags from a new man, but the house kicks and thinks you are n. g. if you keep on piking with the same man.

"This time, I went into his store and said to myself, 'Well, if I can't get this old codger to go down to my sample room, I'm not going to do any business with him at all.'

"When I went into his store I shook hands with him and offered him a cigar. He said, 'Vell, I vont smoke dis now. I lay it avay.'

"If there is anything on earth that makes me mad it is to offer a cigar to a merchant or a clerk who, in truth, doesn't smoke, and have him put it aside and hand it to somebody else after I have left town; but, you know, you bump into that kind once in a while.

"The old man was back in the office. He shook hands pretty friendly, and said, 'How's peezness?'

"'Best ever,' said I. It's always a good thing to be cheerful. All traveling men who go around the country saying that business is poor ought to be knocked in the head. Even if they are not doing a great deal, they should at least say, even in the dullest of times, that business might be a 'lot worse.' It's these croakers on the road who really make business dull when there is every reason for it to be good. I never kick and I don't think any up−to−date man will.

"Well, sir, when the old man had asked me how business was and I'd told him that it was strictly good, I went right square at him. I said: 'Now, look here, Brother Mondheimer, I have been selling you a few goods right along and you've told me that they were satisfactory, but I haven't been doing either myself or you justice. I want you, this time, to come right down with me and see what a line of goods I really have. My stuff is strictly swell. The patterns are up−to−date and I've styles enough to line the whole side of your house. Now, don't let me run in with just a handful of samples and sell you a little stuff, but come down and give me a square chance at a decent order.'

"'Dot's all ride,' said he, 'but I can't get avay. I must stay hier. Ven cost'mers com in, somebody must be hier to vait on 'em.'

"'That's all right,' said I, 'but all your clerks are idle now. There isn't a customer in the store. Things are quiet just now. Suppose you come on down with me.'

"'No, I can't do dot,' said the old man. 'I'd like to but I can't. Von't you breeng op a leedle stoff?'

"I didn't answer his question directly, but I said, 'Now, look here, Brother Mondheimer, suppose a man were to come into your store and want to buy a good suit of clothes. How much profit would you make?'

"'Aboud fife tollars,' said he.

"'Well, how long would you, yourself, spend on that man, trying to make a sale with him?'

"'Vell, I vood nod led him go until I solt him,' said he.

"'All right,—by the way—', said I. 'Can you give me two tens for a twenty?'

"He handed me out two ten dollar gold pieces.

"'Here' said I, slapping down one of the slugs and shoving it over to him, 'Here's ten dollars for ten minutes of your time. That's yours now,—take it! I've bought your time and I dare you come down to my sample room. If you do, I'll make that ten back in less than ten minutes and you'll stay with me an hour and buy a decent bill of goods.'

"Well, sir, the old man wouldn't take the ten—but he did get his hat and he's been an easy customer ever since!"

"Second and last call for dinner," called the dining car boy again.

"Guess this is our last chance," spoke up one of the boys. Then, stretching a little, we washed our hands and went in to dinner.

CHAPTER IX. TACTICS IN SELLING—II.

After we had finished dinner, all of the party came back to our "road club room," the smoker.

"The house," said the furnishing goods man, sailing on our old tack of conversation, "sometimes makes it hard for us, you know. I once had a case like this: One of my customers down in New Orleans had failed on me. I think his muhulla (failure) was forced upon him. Even a tricky merchant does not bring failure upon himself if business is good and he can help it, because, if he has ever been through one, he knows that the bust−up does him a great deal more harm than good. It makes 'credit' hard for him after that. But, you find lots of merchants who, when business gets dull, and they must fail, will either skin their creditors completely or else settle for as few cents on the dollar as possible.

"Well, I had a man in market, once, when I was traveling out of Philadelphia, who had 'settled' for 35 cents on the dollar. He had come out of his failure with enough to leave him able to go into business again, and, with anything like fair trade, discount all his bills. I knew the season was a fairly good one and felt quite sure that, for a few years anyway, my man would be good. What was lost on him was lost, and that was the end of it. The best way to play even was on the profits of future business.

"But our credit man, a most upright gentleman, wasn't particular about taking up the account again. However, there I was on a commission basis! I knew the man would pay for his goods and that it was money in my pocket—and in the till of the house—to sell it.

"I had seen my man at the hotel the evening before and he'd said he would be around the next morning about ten o'clock. I went down to the store before that time and talked the thing over with the credit man.

"Don't want to have anything to do with that fellow,' he said. 'He skinned us once and it's only a matter of time until he'll do it again.'

"The head man of the firm came by about that time and I talked it over with him. He had told me only the day before that he had some 'jobs' he was very anxious to get rid of.

"'Now,' said I to him, 'I believe I have a man from New Orleans who can use a good deal of that plunder up on the sixth floor if you're willing to sell it to him. He uses that kind of "Drek" and is now shaped up so that he'll not wish for more than sixty day terms, and I'm sure he'd be able to pay for it. He's just failed, you know.'

"Well, let him have it—let him have it,' said the old man. 'Anything to get the stuff out of the house. If he doesn't pay for it we won't lose much.'

"'All right, if you both say so, I'll go ahead and sell him.'

"This was really building a credit on 'jobs,' for I believed that my man would after that prove a faithful customer,—and this has been the case for many years.

"Well, when he came in, I took him up to the 'job' floor and sold him about five hundred dollars. This was the limit that the credit man had placed on the account. Then came the rub. I had to smooth down my customer to sixty day terms and yet keep him in a good humor. He thought a great deal of me—I had always been square with him—and he wasn't such a bad fellow. He had merely done what many other men would have done under the same circumstances. When he had got into the hole, he was going to climb out with as many 'rocks' in his pocket as he could. He couldn't pay a hundred cents and keep doing business, and it was just as much disgrace to settle for sixty cents on the dollar, which would leave him flat, as it was to settle for thirty−five. So he argued!

"I brought him up to the credit window and said to the credit man— Gee! I had to be diplomatic then—'Now, this is Mr. Man from New Orleans. You know that cotton has been pretty low for the past season and that he has had a little misfortune that often comes into the path of the business man. He, you also know, has squared this with everybody concerned in an honorable way,—although on account of the dull times he was unable to make as large a settlement as he wished to—isn't that the case, Joe?' said I. He nodded.

"'Yes, but things are picking up with me, you know,' said he.

"'Yes; so they are,' said I, taking up the thread, 'cotton is advancing and times are going to be pretty good down in the south next season. Now, what I've done,' said I to the credit man, as if I had never spoken to him about the matter before, 'is this: Joe, here, has learned a lesson. He has seen the folly, and suffered for it, of buying so many goods so far ahead. What he aims to do from this time on is to run a strictly cash business, and to

buy his goods for cash or on very short terms. We have picked out five hundred dollars' worth of goods—I've closed them pretty cheap—and you shall have your money for this, the bill fully discounted, within sixty days. Then in future, Joe, here, does not wish to buy anything from you or anybody else that he cannot pay for within that time. One bump on the head is enough, eh, Joe?'

"'Yes; you bet your life. I've learned a lesson.'

"'That'll be very satisfactory, sir,' said the credit man, and everything was O. K. You see, I had put the credit man in the position of making short terms and I had tickled Joe and given him something that he needed very badly at that time—credit. This was about the smoothest job I think I ever did. I really don't believe that either the credit man or my customer was fully onto my work. Joe, however, has thanked me for that many a time since. He's paid up my house promptly and used them for reference. They could only tell the truth in the matter, that he was discounting his bills with them. This has given him credit and he's doing a thriving business now, and has been for several years. He is getting long time again from other houses."

"Smooth work all right," said one of the boys, touching the button for the buffet porter.

"Once in a while," said the book man, "you have to pull the wool over a buyer's eyes. I never like to do anything of this sort, and I never do but that I tell them about it afterwards. The straight path is the one for the traveling man to walk in, I know; but once, with one of my men, I had to get off of the pebbles and tread on the grass a little.

"We really sell our publications for less than any other concern in the country. We give fifty off, straight, to save figuring, while many others give 40−10−5, which, added up, makes 55, but, in truth, is less than fifty straight. Once, in Chicago, I fell in on a department store man. I put it up to him and asked him if he would like certain new books that were having a good sale.

"'Yes,' he said, 'but I tell you, John (he knew me pretty well), I can't stand your discounts. You don't let me make enough money. You only give me 50 while others give me 40−10−5.'

"'All right, I'll sell them to you that way,' said I. 'We won't worry about it.'

"'Very good then,' and he gave me his order.

"Next season, when I got around to him, I had forgotten all about the special terms that I had made this man. But after he said he would use a certain number of copies of a book, he jogged my memory on that score with the question:

"'What sort of terms are you going to give me—the same I had last year?'

"'No, sir; I will not,' said I. 'I'm not going to do business with you that way.'

"'Well, if you've done it once, why don't you do it again? Other people do it right along, and your house is still in business. They haven't gone broke.'

"'Yes, you bet your life they're still in business!' said I, 'and they'd make a whole lot more money than they do now if they'd do business on the terms that you ask. Do you know what I did? You wouldn't let me have things my way and be square with you, so I skinned you on that little express order out of just ninety cents, and did it just to teach you a lesson!' I said, planking down a dollar. 'I don't want to trim you too close to the bone.'

"'Well,' said he, after I'd figured out and shown him the difference between 50 off straight and 40−10−5, 'This dollar doesn't belong to me. Come on, let's spend it.'"

"That's pretty good," chimed in the shoe man, who was sitting on a camp stool. The smoking compartment was full. "But it was dangerous play, don't you think? Suppose he'd done that figuring before you'd got around and shown him voluntarily that you skinned him and why. I know one of my customers, at any rate, who would have turned you down for good on this sort of a deal. He is a fair, square, frank man—most merchants, I find, are that way anyhow."

"Yes; you're right," said John.

"I got at the man I speak of this way," said the shoe man. "I had called on him many times. He was such a thoroughbred gentleman and treated me so courteously that I could never press matters upon him. There are merchants, you know, of this kind. I'd really rather have a man spar me with bare 'knucks' than with eight−ounce pillows. This gives you a better chance to land a knock−out blow. But there is a way of getting at every merchant in the world. The thing to do is to find the way.

"As I stood talking to this gentleman—it was out in Seattle—in came a Salvation Army girl selling 'The War Cry.' When she came around where I was, my merchant friend gave her a quarter for one, and told her to keep the

change. Do you know, I sized him up from that. It showed me just as plain as day that he was kind hearted and it struck me, quick as a flash, that my play was generosity. People somehow who are free at heart admire this trait in others. When a man has once been liberal and knows what a good feeling it gives him on the inside, to do a good turn for some poor devil that needs it, he will always keep it up, and he has a soft spot in his heart for the man who will dig up for charity.

"I didn't plank down my money with any attempt to make a show, but I simply slipped a dollar into the Salvation Army Captain's hand, and said, 'Sister, the War Cry is worth that much to me. I always read it and I'm really very glad you brought this copy around to me.'

"Now, this wasn't altogether play, boys, you know. If there is any one in the world who is a true and literal Christian, it is the girl who wears the Salvation Army bonnet. And to just give your money isn't always the thing. A little kind word to go along with it multiplies the gift.

"After a while, when I got around to it—I talked with the merchant for some time about various things—I said, as politely as I could: 'Now, you know your affairs a great deal better than I do myself, but it is barely possible that I might have something in my line that would interest you. My house is old established and they do business in a straightforward manner. If you can spare the time, I should be very glad indeed to have you see what I am carrying. I assure you that I shall not bore you in the sample room. I never do this because I don't like to have any one feel I'm attempting to know more of his affairs than he does.'

"'If such were the case,' said my merchant friend, 'why, then, I ought to sell out to you.'

"'Then you are right,' said I. 'Nothing bothers me more, on going into a barber shop when I'm in a rush and wish nothing but a shave, than to have the barber insist on cutting my hair, singing it, giving me a shampoo, and a face massage.'

"'Well, I don't think I'm needing anything just now,' said my merchant friend. 'But as you're here, I'll run down and see you right after luncheon. 'No,' said he, pulling out his watch, 'I might as well go with you right now. It is half past eleven and that will give you all the afternoon free.'

"'Very well,' said I, 'this is kind of you. I am at your service.'

"It was considerate of him to go along with me right then, for the time of a traveling man relatively is more valuable than that of any other man I know of. In many lines he must make his living in four to six months in the year. Every minute of daylight, when he is on the road, means to him just twice that time or more!

"Do you know, I never had in my sample room a finer man. He very quickly looked over what I had and when he said to me, 'Do you know, I'm really glad that I've come down with you. You have some things that strike me. I hadn't intended putting in any more goods for this season, but here are a few numbers that I'm sure I can use. I can't give you a very large order. However, if you're willing to take what I wish, I shall be very glad to give you a small one; but if your goods turn out all right, and this I have no right to question, we shall do more business in future.'

"I took the order, which wasn't such a small one, either, and from that time on he has always been a pleasant customer. He was a gentleman−merchant!"

"He's the kind that always gets the best that's coming," broke in two or three of the boys at once.

"Yes, you bet your life!" exclaimed the shoe man. "If a man wishes to get the best I have, that is the way I like him to come at me. To be sure, I do a one price business; but even then, you know, we can all do a man a good turn if he makes us have an interest in his business by treating us courteously. We can serve him by helping him select the best things in our lines, and by not overloading him."

"Many's the way," said the dry goods man, "that we have of getting a man's ear. In '96 I was traveling in Western Nebraska. That state, you know, is Bryan's home. Things were mighty hot out there in September, and nearly everybody in that part of the country was for him; but when you did strike one that was on the other side, he was there good and hard! Yet, most of those who were against Bryan by the time September rolled around were beginning to think that he was going to win out. I had just left Chicago and had been attending a great many Republican political meetings. I had read the Chicago newspapers, all of which were against Bryan that year, and thought that while there was a good deal of hurrah going on, he didn't stand a ghost of a show, and I was willing to bet my money on it.

"I didn't have a customer in this town. It was Beaver City. You know how the stores are all built around three sides of a public square. I was out scouting for a looker. I dropped into one man's store—he was a Republican,

but he said to me, 'Heavens alive! How do you expect me to buy any goods this year? Why, Bryan's going to be elected sure's your born, and this whole country is going to the devil. I'm a Republican and working against him as hard as I can, but I'm not going to get myself in debt and go broke all the same.

"'The only man in this town who thinks Bryan isn't going to win is old man Jarvis across the way. If he keeps on buying and things come out the way I think they will, I'll have one less competitor when things all blow over.'

"I looked in my agency book. As a rule, they're not worth a rap for anything except to give the names of merchants in a town and the sort of business they're in, but when I got down to the J's I saw that Jarvis was rated ten to twenty thousand. I stuck the book in my pocket and made straight for where I saw his name over the door.

"First thing he boned me about was, 'Well, how's the election going in Illinois and back East?'

"'Oh, Bryan will be put under a snow bank so deep he'll never get out,' said I, 'when November gets here.'

"'Good!' said he. 'You're the first man I've seen for a month who's agreed with me. I don't think he'll run one, two, three. These fellows out here in this country are all crazy because Bryan's come from this state; and a few hayseed Populists who've always been Republican heretofore are going to vote for him. Shucks! They don't amount to anything. It's the East that settles an election, and the working man. Why, they're not going to see this country go to the devil because a few of these crazy Pops out here are going to vote the Democratic ticket!'

"The druggist from next door, who overheard the old man, spoke up hotly and said, 'Well, I'm one of them crazy Pops you're talking about. You haven't any money that says Bryan's goin' to lose, have you?'

"'Well, I'm not a betting man,' said Jarvis, 'but if I was, I'd put up my store against yours,—the building and all against your stock.'

"'Well, I wish you were a betting man,' said the druggist. 'You'd better either put up or shut up. I'll jest bet you ten dollars even that Bryan does win.'

"'I'll take that bet, my friend,' said I, knowing that the effect of the wager on Jarvis would be worth more than the bet itself. I reached for my roll of expense money—I had about two hundred dollars on me— and slipped out a 'tenner.' The druggist went in next door and got his money. The old man held the stakes.

"I was the only man who'd been in that town for a long time who was willing to bet on McKinley, and pretty soon a dozen fellows were after me. In about twenty minutes I had put up all I had, and went over to the bank and drew a couple of hundred more. I drew it on personal account as I had plenty of money coming to me from the firm. Soon a couple of fellows came in who wanted to put up a hundred each. I covered their piles, went back to the bank and made another draft—in all, I planked up five hundred dollars before leaving town. Jarvis was my stake holder.

"'Say,' said he, 'young fellow, I've never done any business with you, but, by Heavens! I like your pluck, and I'm going right over to your sample room whether you ask me to or not and give you an order. This is the best time for me to buy goods. All these other fellows around here are croaking about the election and they're not going to have anything to sell these people. Shoes are going to wear out and the sun is going to fade calico, Bryan or no Bryan! I want some goods on my shelves. Come on, let's go now before it gets dark!'

"I never sold a bill so easy in my life. The old man would pick up a bundle of sample cards and say, 'Here, you send me about what you think I ought to have out of this lot,' and while I was writing down the items, he would talk politics. I sold him a nailer."

"Well, you had pretty good luck in that town," spoke up one of the boys, "to get a good bill and also win five hundred dollars."

"Didn't win it, though," said the dry goods man.

"Well, how's that? Didn't McKinley win the election? You were betting on him."

"Yes, but I got back to Chicago about the time that Bryan struck there. I went down to the old shack on the lake front where the Post Office now is, and heard Bryan speak to the business men. It looked to me like the whole house was with him. I heard a dozen men around where I sat say, after the speech was over, that they had intended to vote against him, but that they were sure going to vote for Bryan. That same day I hedged on my five hundred."

"Well, you got a good customer out of the deal anyhow."

"Yes, I did; but I thought I'd lost him. After the election he sent me the thousand and I went down to see him. You know I voted for Bryan."

"Changed your mind, did you?"

"Change? Did you ever hear Bryan speak? When I met the old man I made a clean breast of it, and said, 'I'm mighty sorry to tell you, but I voted for Bryan.'

"'Well, that's all right,' he said. 'So did I.'"

CHAPTER X. TACTICS IN SELLING—III. GETTING A MERCHANT'S ATTENTION.

"Seven and nine," said the porter, poking his head into the Pullman smoker, "are all made down."

With this, a couple of the boys bade us goodnight and turned in, but soon two more drifted in and took their places.

"Getting a merchant's attention," said the furnishing goods man, "is the main thing. You may get a man to answer your questions in a sort of a way but you really do not have his attention always when he talks to you. You would better not call on a man at all than go at him in a listless sort of a way. This is where the old timer has the bulge over the new man. I once knew a man who had been a successful clerk for many years who started on the road with a line of pants. He had worked for one of my old customers. I chanced to meet him, when I was starting on my trip, at the very time when he was making his maiden effort at selling a bill to the man for whom he had been working. Of course this was a push−over for him because his old employer gave him an order as a compliment.

"Well, sir, when that fellow learned that I was going West—this was on the Northern Pacific—he hung right on to me and said he would like to go along. Of course, I told him I should be very glad to have him do so, and that I would do for him whatever I could. But here he made a mistake. When a man starts out on the road he must paddle his own canoe. It is about as much as his friend can do to sell his own line of goods, much less to put in a boost for somebody else. And, furthermore, a man who takes a young chick under his wing will often cut off some of his own feed. Still, this fellow had always been very friendly with me and I told him, 'Why, to be sure, Henry; come right along with me.'

"In the second and third towns that we made, he picked up a couple of small bills that just about paid his expenses. He was just beginning to find that the road was not such an easy path to travel as, in his own mind, he had cracked it up to be.

"The next town we struck was Bismarck, North Dakota. We got in there about three o'clock in the morning. It was Thanksgiving Day. To be sure, I went to bed and had a good sleep. A man must always feel fresh, you know, if he expects to do any work.

"It was about eleven o'clock before I breakfasted, opened up, and started across the street. My old customer had burned out there and I, too, had to go out and rustle some man. Just as I started over toward town, I met my German friend Henry coming back. His face looked like a full moon shining through a cloud. I could see that there was trouble on his mind.

"'Well, Henry, how goes it?' said I.

"'Id don't go so goot,' said he. 'But vat can a man expect on Danksgifing? I vent to see von man and he said, "I haf an olt house dat alvays dreats me right, so vat's de use of chanching?" Vell, vat archument could I make against dot? I vent in to see anodder man and he said, "I haf an olt friend dot I buy from," and vat archument could I make against dot? I vent in to see still anodder, and he said, "I haf just bought," so, vat archument could I make against dot? The next man I vent to see said, "Mein Gott, man; don'd you suppose I am going to rest von day in de year? So I t'ought dere vas no use fooling mit him, so I t'ink I vill pack op and eat a goot dinner and take a goot nap and go vest again in de morning.'

"'All right, Henry,' said I; 'but I guess I'll go over and try my luck.'

"The first man that I went to see was the one who had said to my friend Henry that he thought he ought to have one day in the year to rest. He was the biggest merchant in the town in my line. When I reached his store he was putting the key in the door to lock up and go home for his Thanksgiving dinner.

"I couldn't talk to him out there in the cold—we were strangers—so I said to him, 'I should like to buy a couple of collars if you please.' He sold me the collars and then, just for a bluff, I made out that mine was hurting me and took a few minutes to put on another one. I didn't say anything about what my business was and the merchant, in order to have something to say, asked, 'Are you a stranger in town?'

"'Yes, sir,' said I, 'I am. But I hope that I shall not be very much longer. I am out looking for a location.'

"'You are a physician, then?' said the merchant.

"'Yes, sir,—in a way,' said I; 'but I treat diseases in rather a peculiar way, I fancy. I believe in going down to the cause of diseases and treating the cause rather than the disease itself. My specialty is the eye. Now, you see, if the eye looks at bright, sparkling snow, it is strained; but if it looks at a green pasture, that color rests it. In fact, if the eye looks upon anything that is not pleasing to it, it does it an injury. Now, my way of getting down to the root of all this eye trouble is to place before it things that are pleasing to look upon, and in this way, make eye salves and things of that kind unnecessary. In just a word,' said I (I had his attention completely), 'I am selling the prettiest, nobbiest, most up−to−date line of furnishing goods there is on the road. They are so attractive that they are good for sore eyes. Now, the only way I can back up this statement is by showing you what I have. When will it suit you to look at them? The location that I am looking for is a location for my goods right here on your shelves.'

"Well, sir; do you know, that merchant really came down to my sample room on Thanksgiving Day—he hardly took time to eat his dinner—and I sold him.

"I didn't see any more of my friend Henry until the next morning. The train was late and left about seven o'clock.

"'Vell, what luck yesterday?' said Henry.

"As he came up to me in the train where I was sitting with a friend, I said, 'Well, I sold a bill.'

"'Who bought of you?'

"'The clothing man here.'

"'Vell, dot's de feller,' said Henry, 'dot told me he vas going to haf von day in de year for his family. And you solt him? Vell, how did you do id?'

"I briefly told Henry of my experience.

"'Vell, dot vas goot,' said he.

[Illustration: You'd better write that down with a pencil," said Henry.]

"My advance agent friend, who had sat beside me—Henry had fallen in with us in our double seat—said to Henry, 'Now, that's a good line of argument. Why don't you use that sometime?' A twinkle came into my theatrical friend's eye when Henry did, in fact, ask my permission to use this line of talk. I told Henry, 'Why, sure, go on and use that argument anywhere you want to. I shall not use it again because in every town that I shall strike, from this time on, I have an old established customer. I have no use for that argument. Just go and use it.'

"'You'd better write that down with a pencil, Henry,' said the advance agent—Stanley was his name.

"'No, dere's no use ov writing dot down,' said Henry. 'Dot archurnent vas so clear dot I haf it in my headt!'

"But, sure enough, Henry took out his lead pencil and jotted down the points in the back of his order book. In the next town we struck, one of the merchants was a gruff old Tartar. He was the first man that Henry lit onto.

"Now, an old merchant can size up a traveling man very soon after he enters the door. The shoeman will go over to where the shoes are kept; the hat man will turn his face toward the hat case; the furnishing goods man will size up the display of neckwear; in fact, a merchant once told me that he could even tell the difference between a clothing man and a pants man. A clothing man will walk up to a table and run his hands over the coats while a pants man will always finger the trousers to a suit.

"Well, sir, when Henry walked into this gruff old merchant's store, he found him busy waiting on a customer so up he marched to a clothing table and began to feel of a pile of pants. After the customer went out he went up to the old man and said to him, 'Gootmorning, sir. I am a physician, sir, and I am looking for a logation—'

"'You are no such a ——thing,' said the old man. 'You are selling pants.'

"Henry told me of this experience when he came back to the hotel and he was so broken hearted that he almost felt like going back home. In fact, he didn't last more than about three weeks. He had started too late in life to learn the arts of the traveling man."

"You bet," said the wall paper man who had heard this story. "Attention is the whole cheese. I know I once tried my hardest to get hold of an old Irishman down in Texas. He was a jolly old chap but I couldn't get next. There wasn't any sample room in the town and if I showed my goods to any one, I would have to get his consent to let me bring my stuff into his store. When I struck old Murphy to let me bring my goods in, he gave me a stand−off so hard that another one of the boys who was in the store gave me the laugh. This riled me a little and I said to my friend who thought he had the joke on me, 'I am going to sell that old duck just the same.' 'I'll bet a new hat you don't,' said he. Something flashed across me somehow or other. I got bold and I said, I'll just take that bet.'

"I had to wait in town anyway for several hours so that I couldn't get out until after supper. So I went up to the hotel for dinner. That afternoon I went back to Murphy's store, pulled out a cigar case and, passing it over to the old gentleman, said, 'Take one, neighbor. These are out of my private box.' It was really a good cigar and the old man, giving me a little blarney, said, 'Surre, that cigare is a birrd.' 'I'm glad you like it,' said I. 'I have those sent me from Chicago, a fresh box every week. If you like it so well, here, take a couple more. I have lots of them in my grip.' I laid a couple on the old man's desk and he didn't object.

"'Now, Mr. Murphy,' said I, 'I know you don't wish to look at any of my goods whatsoever, and I'm not the man to ask you the second time. In fact, I am really glad you don't wish to buy some goods from me because it gives me a chance to run through my samples. I've been aiming to do some work on them for several days but really haven't had the time—I've been so busy. But, as there's nobody else here in the town that I care to see (a mild dose of "smoosh," given at the right time and in the right way, never does any harm, you know) and as there's no sample room here I'm sure you'll allow me to have my trunk thrown in your store where I shall not be in your way. I wish to rid myself of "outs."

"'Surre, me b'y; surre me b'y,' said the old man. 'Toike all the room you will but ye know Oime not for lookin' at your goods. Oime waitin' fer a friend, ye know.'

"'Very well, thank you; I promise you faithfully, Mr. Murphy, that I'll not show you any goods. I merely wish to get rid of my "tear− outs" and straighten up my line.'

"When the drayman dumped my trunk into the back end of the store, I opened up on the counter and tore off several 'outs.' I let my samples lie there and went up the street, but came back several times and peeped into the front window to see what the old man was doing. I did this three or four times and finally I saw him and one of the clerks back where my samples were, fingering them over.

"Then I went around to the back door, which was near where my samples were, marched right in and caught the old man in the act."

"Sell him?" spoke up one of the boys.

"Sure," said the wall paper man, "and I made the man who had lost the hat come down and buy one for me from the old Irishman."

"Well, that was a clever sale," said the hat man, "but you have, you know, as much trouble sometimes holding an old customer in line as you do in selling a new one. For my own part, whenever a customer gets clear off the hook, I let him swim. You have a great deal better luck casting your fly for new fish than you do in throwing your bait for one that has got away from you. My rule is, when a man is gone—let him go. But, as long as I have him on the hook, I am going to play him.

"When I was down in New Orleans a few seasons ago, one of my old customers said, 'Look here, I don't see any use of buying goods from you. I can buy them right home just as cheaply as you sell them to me, and save the freight. This freight item amounts to a good deal in the course of a year. See, here is a stiff hat that I buy for twenty−four dollars a dozen that is just as good as the one that you are selling me for the same money. Look at it.' He passed it over to me. I rubbed my hand over the crown and quickly I rapped the derby over my fist knocking the crown clean off it. I threw the rim onto the floor and didn't say a word. This play cost me a new hat but it was the best way I could answer my customer's argument. After that, my customer was as gentle as a dove. He afterwards admitted that he liked my goods better but that he was trying to work me for the difference in freight."

"The clerk can always give you a good many straight tips," spoke up one of the boys.

"Yes, and you bet your life he does his best to queer you once in a while, too!" said the clothing man. "I know I had a tough tussle with one not a great while ago down in Pittsburgh. Last season I placed a small bunch of stuff in a big store there. I had been late in getting around but the merchant liked my samples and told me that if the goods delivered turned out all right he would give me good business this season.

"Now, my house delivers right up to sample. A great many houses do not, and so merchants go not on the samples they look at but according to the goods delivered to them. It is the house that delivers good merchandise that holds its business, not the one that shows bright samples on the road and ships poor stuff.

"I went up to my man's store—this was just a few weeks ago—and asked him to come over with me.

"'My head clothing man,' said my customer, 'does not like your stuff. I might as well be frank with you about it.' 'What objection has he to it?' said I. 'He says they don't fit. He says the trimmings and everything are all right and I wish they did fit because your prices look cheap to me.' 'Well, let's go over and see about that,' said I.

'There's no one in the world more willing and anxious to make things right than I am if there is anything wrong.' I didn't know just what I had to go up against. The man on the road gets all the kicks.

"Once in a while there is a clerk who puts out his hand like the boy who waits on you at table and if pretty good coin is not dropped in it or some favor shown him, he will have it in for you.

"My customer and I walked over to where the clerk was and I came right out, and said, 'Johnny, what's the matter with this clothing you've received from me? Mr. Green (the merchant) here tells me you say it doesn't fit. Let's see about that.'

"The clerk was slim and stoop−shouldered. The tailor to his royal highness could not have made a coat hang right on him.

"'Now, you are kicking so much, Johnnie, on my clothing, you go here in this store and pick out some coats your size from other people and let's see how they fit. Let's put this thing to a fair test.'

"'That's square,' said Green. 'If a thing is so, I want to know it; if it isn't, I want to know it.'

"I slipped onto Johnnie three or four of my competitor's coats that he brought and they hung upon him about as well as they would on a scare−crow.

"'Now, Johnnie, you are a good boy,' said I, 'but you've been inside so long that the Lord, kind as He is, hasn't built you just right. You are not the man who is to wear this clothing that comes into this store. It is the other fellow. My house does not make clothing for people who are not built right. We take the perfect man as our pattern and build to suit him. There are so many more people in the world who are strong and robust and well proportioned than there are those who are not, that it is a great deal better to make clothing for the properly built man than for the invalid. Now, I just want to show you how this clothing does fit. You take any coat that you wish. Bring me half a dozen of them if you will—one from every line that you bought from me, if you wish. I wear a 38. Bring my size and let's see how they look. If they are not all right, I am the man who, most of all, wishes to know it. I can't afford to go around the country showing good samples and selling poor stuff. If my stuff isn't right, I am going to change houses but I want to tell you that you're the first man on this whole trip that has made a single complaint. Those who bought small bills from me last season are buying good bills from me this time. They have said that my goods give splendid satisfaction. Now, you just simply go, Johnnie, and get me ten coats. I sold you ten numbers—I remember exactly—l20 suits—one from every line that you bought, and I want to show you that there isn't a bad fitter in the whole lot.'

"'Yes, do that, Johnnie,' said the merchant. 'His stuff looked all right to me when I bought it. I, myself, have not had time to pay much attention to it and I will have to take your word for these things, but, now that the question is up, we'll see about it.'

"The clerk started to dig out my size but he couldn't find a 38 in but three lots to save his life. I put these on and they fit to a 'T'. I looked in the mirror myself and could see that the fit was perfect.

[Illustration: "Shure, that cigare is a birrd"]

"'Now, look here, Brother Green,' said I, 'what are you in business for? You are in business to buy the best stuff that you can for your money. Now, you remember you thought when you bought my goods that they were from one to two dollars a suit cheaper and just as good as anything you had seen. Now, if you can buy something from me just as good as another man can give you, and buy it cheaper, you are going to do it, aren't you?'

"'Why, to be sure, Jim,' said Green, warming up.

"'Now, look here, it isn't the opinion of your clerk or your own opinion even that you care a rap for. The opinion that is worth something is that of the man who buys his goods from you. Now, you see very plainly that my stuff is good. Thirty−eight is a size of which you bought many and you haven't that size left in but three lines out of ten. Here you see very plainly that my goods have moved faster than any other clothing you have bought this season; and, as far as the fit is concerned, you see full well, that other stuff didn't fit Johnnie because he isn't built right. You did see—and you do see—I have one of them on right now—that my clothing fits a well−built man.'

"I saw that I had the old man on my side and I knew that Johnnie had dropped several points in his estimation. The truth of the matter was the clerk was knocking on me in favor of one of his old friends. Of course I wouldn't come right out and say this but the old man himself grew wise on this point because that afternoon he came down by himself and bought from me a good, fat bill. The clerk simply killed himself by not being fair with me. No clerk who expects promotion can afford to play favorites."

"It's all right when you can get over the clerk's head and to the merchant himself," chimed in the Boys' Children's Clothing man, "when there is any graft going around, but it is a hard game to play when you must deal with a buyer who is the supreme judge. I once had an experience with a buyer down in California. I went into one of the big stores down there and jollied around with the buyer in my department. He said he would come over and look at my line. He took the hook so quickly that I ought to have been on to him to start with, but I didn't. He came over to my sample room in the evening. Now that, you know, isn't a very good time to buy clothing. Nothing is as good as daylight for that. He didn't question my price or anything of that sort. He would look at a few things and then stop and talk horse with me for awhile. I don't like to do business with that kind of a fellow. When I do business, I like to do business; when I talk horse I like to talk horse; and I want a man with me in the sample room who is interested in what he is doing. It is the busy man, anyway, that makes you a good customer—not the one with whom business is merely a side issue.

"After monkeying around a couple of hours, I managed to get laid out a pretty fair line of stuff. 'Now,' said the buyer, 'to−night I can only make up a list of what's here. These things suit me pretty well, and in the morning I can submit it to the old man for his O.K.'

"Well, that looked easy to me so we wrote down the order, and when we got through, that fellow was bold enough to come right out and say, 'Now, look here, you're making a pretty good commission on this stuff —here's a good bill, and I can throw it to you if I wish, or I can kill it if I like. I'm not getting any too much over where I am, so don't you think your house can dig up about twenty for me on this bill, and I'll see that it sticks?'"

"Did you dig?" said one of the boys.

"Dig? You bet your life not. This funny business, I won't do. It may work for one bill but it won't last long because it is only a matter of time before the buyer who will be bribed will be jumped and lose his job. I simply told the fellow that I didn't do that sort of business; that unless he wished to do business with me strictly on the square, I wouldn't do business with him at all."

"Well, what did he say to this?" said I.

"Oh, he said to me, 'I'm just joshing with you and I really wanted to see if I couldn't get you down a little and make that much more for the house. I like to do business myself with any one who is on the square.'" "The order stuck then?" asked the wall paper man.

"No, it didn't. That's the worst of it. A few days after I reached home in came a cancellation from the head of the house. At that time, I didn't understand it. I supposed that the head of the house himself had really canceled the order, so the next time I went to that town, I waltzed straight up to the office and asked to see the head of the establishment. I asked him why he had canceled my order and he told me that his buyer really had all of that in charge and that he only followed out his recommendations; that the buyer had told him to cancel that bill and he had done so.

"I saw through the whole scheme. There was just one thing for me to do. I simply came right square out and told the old man that his buyer had wanted to get $20.00 from me to make the bill stick; and I bet him a hundred that the clerk had canceled my order so that he could get a rake−off from somebody else.

"The old man sent for the buyer and told him to get his pay and leave. He thanked me for putting him wise and from that time on, he or some other member of the firm always goes to the sample room."

Now, it must not be thought that every sale that is made must be put through by some bright turn. These stories I have told about getting the merchant's attention are the extreme cases. The general on the field of battle ofttimes must order a flank movement, or a spirited cavalry dash; but he wins his battle by following a well−thought−out plan. So with the salesman. He must rely, in the main, upon good, quiet, steady, well−planned work. Some merchants compel a man to use extraordinary means to catch them at the start. And the all−around salesman will be able to meet such an emergency right at the moment, and in an original way that will win.

CHAPTER XI. CUTTING PRICES.

Is not the salesman on the road who sells goods to one customer at one price and to another at another price, a thief? Is not the house which allows its salesman to do this an accomplice to the crime of theft?

This is a hot shot, I know; but, if you are a salesman, ask yourself if it is right to get the marked price of an article from a friend who gives you his confidence, and then sell the same thing for a lower price to another man who is suspicious and beats you down. Ask yourself, if you have men on the road, whether or not it is right for you to allow your salesman to do these things, and then answer "Yes" or "No." You will all answer "No, but we can't help ourselves."

You can. A friend of mine, who travels for a large house, way down East, that employs one hundred road salesmen, told me recently of an experience directly in point. I will let him tell the story to you:

"It is the custom in our house, you know, for all of the boys to meet together twice each year when we come in after our samples. After we get our samples marked and packed, and are ready for the road, the 'old gentleman' in the house gives us all a banquet. He sits at the head of the table and is toastmaster.

"He is wise in bringing the boys together in this way because he knows that the boys on the road know how things ought to be and that they can give him a great many pointers. He has a stenographer present who takes down every word that is said during the evening. The reports of these semi−annual meetings are the law books of this house.

"At our last meeting the 'old gentleman' when he first arose to speak, said: 'Look here, boys'—he knew how to take us all—'there is one thing about our system of business that I do not like; it is this cutting of prices. Now, what I would like to do this very season—and I have thought of it since you have all packed up your trunks—is to have all samples marked in plain figures and for no man to deviate in any way from the prices. Of course this is rather a bold thing to do in that we have done business in the old way of marking goods in characters for many years, so I wish to hear from you all and see what you think about it. I shall wish as many of you as will to state in words just what you think on this subject, one by one; but first of all, I wish that every man who favors marking samples in plain figures and not varying from the price would stand up, and that those who think the other way would keep their seats.'

"Well, sir, do you know I was the only man out of that whole hundred to stand up. The others sat there. After standing for a moment I sat down, and the 'old gentleman' arose again.

"'Well, the vote is so near unanimous,' said the 'old gentleman,' "that it seems hardly necessary for us to discuss the matter. Yet it is possible that one man may be right and ninety−nine may be wrong, so let us hear from one of our salesmen who differs from his ninety−nine brethren.'

"With this I stood up, and I made a speech something like this: 'Mr. President, and Fellow Salesmen: I am very glad that our worthy President has given me the right to speak. He has said that one man in a hundred may be right even though ninety−nine do not believe as he does. There is no may be about it. I do not think that I am right. I KNOW IT. I speak from experience. When I first started on the road one of my old friends in the house—I was just a stock boy, you know, going out for the first time, not knowing whether I would succeed or fail—this old friend gave me this advice: Said he, "Billy, it is better for you to be abused for selling goods cheaply than to be fired for not selling them at all." With this advice before me from an old salesman in the house, and knowing that all of the salesmen nearly in greater or less degree slaughtered the price of goods, I went out on the road. The first thing I began to do was to cut, cut, cut. Letters came to me from the house to quit it, but I kept on cutting, cutting, cutting. I knew that the other boys in the house did it, and I did not see any reason why I should not. It was my habit to do this: If a man was hard to move in any way and was mean to me I came at him with prices. If he treated me gentlemanly and gave me his confidence, I robbed him—that is, I got the full marked price, while the other fellow bought goods cheaper than this man. Once I got caught up with. Two of my customers met in market and, as merchants usually do when they meet in market, they began to discuss the lines of goods which they carried. They found that they both carried my line, and my good friend learned that the other fellow bought certain lines cheaper than he did.

"'The next time I went around to his town I wore the same old good smile and everything of that kind but I

soon saw that he did not take to me as kindly as before. When I asked him to come over to my sample room, he said to me, "No, I will not go over—I shall not buy any more goods from you."

"'"Why, what is the matter?" I asked.

"'"Oh, never mind, I just don't care to handle your line," said he.

"'"Why, aren't the goods all right?" I asked.

"'"Yes, the goods are all right, and since you have pressed the question I wish to tell you that the reason why I don't care to buy any more goods from you is that you have sold goods to other people for less money than you have to me."

"'I could not deny it, and even when I offered to sell him goods at the same price that I had other people he said to me, "No, sir; you can't sell me goods at any price. I don't care to deal with a man who does business that way."

"'This set me to thinking, and I thought about it so hard that I began to see that I was not doing right and, furthermore, that I was not doing what would help me to build up a permanent business. I saw that I was trying to build business by making many merchants think that I was a cut−throat rather than a man in whom they could place confidence. So I believe in marking goods in plain figures and selling to every one for the same price. And, gentlemen, I even changed territories so I could go into a new one and build a business on the square. Whether or not I have prospered, you all know.'

"The old gentleman arose and said: 'Now, what our good friend has just said, strikes me just right, and if I were a salesman I would follow out his ideas; he has convinced me. But what do you other gentlemen think of this? I would like to hear from you.'

"One by one the boys got up, not all of them, but many. Boiled down, the reasons which they gave for not wishing to mark their goods in plain figures, were these:

"First. That ofttimes one of their customer's patrons might wish to make a special order and if he saw the samples marked in plain figures he would find out just how much profit was being made.

"Second. That often they showed goods in a man's store and people who were standing around would see what the wholesale price was.

"Third. That most merchants like to feel that they are buying goods cheaper than any one else.

"After all of these arguments were made, the old gentleman asked me to reply to them. I did so in these words:

"'Now, as to your first argument about special orders. The man on the road should not try or wish to sell one hat or one pair of shoes or one suit of clothes to some special customer who will take half an hour to make his selection. What he should do is to sell a merchant a good bill—and he can sell a whole bill of goods about as quickly as he can sell one special item. If marking my goods in plain figures would do nothing more than keep away from my sample room these special order fiends which hound every merchant in the country, that alone would lead me to do it.'

"When I said this, several of the boys clapped their hands, and I saw that things were coming my way.

"'Now, as to your second argument regarding showing goods in a merchant's store. If there is anything I detest it is to do this, because when you go to show a man your goods you should have his complete attention. This you cannot get when there are customers present or a lot of loafers around the store cutting into what you are doing. I would rather open up in the office of a burning livery stable than have a whole day in a store. What you want to do, gentlemen,' said I, 'is this: Not to carry your samples to your customer's store, but to take your customer to your store—your sample room. There you get his complete attention, without which no one can make a successful sale.'

"Still more of the boys applauded me and I continued:

"'Now, gentlemen, as to the last point. Several of you have said that some merchants wish to think that they buy from you cheaper than other merchants in neighboring towns. They do not wish to think anything of the kind. What they do wish to think is that they are buying them as cheaply as their neighbors do.' Still more of the boys applauded what I said, and one fellow who traveled down in Missouri yelled like a coon hunter.

"'The basis of love, gentlemen,' I persisted, 'is respect. Some of you have had the good sense to marry. To each of these I say: Before the girl who is now your wife found that she loved you, she discovered that you had her respect and admiration.

"'And there is not a single one of you who has a customer that does not have at least a little confidence in you.

Confidence is the basis of business.

"'Now, I want to tell you another thing'—I was getting warm then—'It is impossible to tell a lie so that the man to whom you tell it will believe it is the truth. If a man has a lie in his heart, that lie will be felt and spotted by the men he talks to while he affirms with his lips that he speaks the truth. If a merchant asks you if you are selling him goods as cheaply as you sell them to other people, and you tell him "Yes" and you are really not doing so, he will know that you are telling him a lie, and you will lose his confidence and you will lose his business. The one thing to do then, is to treat everybody alike—to sell them all at the same price.

"Now, it is possible for a man to mark his samples in characters and to do a one−price business, but you can bet your life that the stranger will be leery of you if your goods are marked in characters. But if you mark your goods in plain figures and you say to a merchant when you begin to show them to him that your goods are marked in plain figures and that you do not vary from the price, he will believe you and will not try to beat you down. Then you will gain his confidence and he will have more confidence in you, the plain−figure man, than he will in the character−price man from whom he might have been buying for years.

"'Judgment is scarcely a factor in business; even many good merchants are not judges of goods. They are all free to confess this. The best merchant is the best judge of men. These merchants, therefore, must and do depend upon the salesmen from whom they buy their goods. Here, again, is where confidence comes in. This whole thing is confidence, I say. Many a merchant passes up lines of goods that he thinks are better than those he is handling—passes them up because he does not know their superiority and because he does not trust the man who tries to sell them to him.

"'Merchants themselves—many of them—give baits to their customers. They know this game full well, and they do not care for baits themselves. I remember that I once sold a bill of goods in this way: I had sold this customer regularly for five or six years every season. This time he told me that he had bought. He said to me: "The other fellow gave me his price one morning and then he came over to see me in the afternoon and dropped on the price and I bought the goods then because I knew I had him at the bottom."

"'Now, do you suppose I went to making cuts to get even with that other fellow? Not a bit of it. I first showed my old customer that he did not know the values of goods. Then I told him: "Now, you may buy my goods if you like; but you will buy them no cheaper than I have been selling them to you for the last five or six years. Do you suppose that I would come around here to−day and make an open confession that I have been robbing you for all of these years? No, sir; I try to see that my goods are marked right in the beginning and then I treat everybody alike." Although he had turned me down, this man bought my goods and countermanded the order of the other fellow.

"'And, boys—you who have been so dishonest so long'—said I, 'don't know how happy it makes a fellow feel to know that what he is doing is right, and you cannot beat the right. It is good enough. When you know in your own heart that you are honorable in your dealings with your merchant friends, you can walk right square up to them and look them straight in the eye and make them feel that you are treating them right. They will then give you their confidence, and confidence begets business. Therefore, gentlemen, I don't care what any of you are going to do. I, myself, shall mark my goods in plain figures and sell them at the same price to everyone, and I only wish that I worked for a firm that would compel all their salesmen to be honest.'

"With this, the old man arose. I saw that I had him won over, but I heard one of the boys who sat near me whisper, 'Now, watch the old man give it to him.' But he did not. Instead, he said to me: 'This is surely a case where, although there were ninety−nine against him, the one is right. I hereby issue an order to every salesman to mark his goods in plain figures and to sell his goods at the marked price. I wish you, furthermore, to do another thing. On every sample on which I told you you might make a cut, if necessary, I wish you would make that cut on the start. I have always wished to do business as our one−priced friend has suggested but I have never been strong enough to do so. I had always thought myself honest, believing that business expediency made it necessary to give a few people the inside over others; but I am going to make a frank confession to you—I can say that I have not been honest. "'I feel like a certain clothing manufacturer felt for a long time. I was talking with him at luncheon the other day; he is a man who marks his goods in plain figures. If the salesman, by mistake, sold a ten dollar suit for eleven dollars, the goods when shipped out are billed at ten dollars. He is the one, gentlemen, who put this plain−figure idea into my head. One of his salesmen, as we all sat together at the table, asked him: "Mr. Blank, how many years have you been doing the one−price, plain−figure business?"

"'"A little over four years," said he.

"'"And how old are you?" the salesman asked.

"'"Fifty−five," was the answer.

"'"In other words," said he, "you have been a thief for over half a century."

"'"Yes; you're right," said the clothing manufacturer—and this was the only time I ever heard him agree with anybody in my life!

"'His business philosophy was quaintly summed up in the one word PERVERSE. "Give a man what he wants," he said, "and he doesn't want it." "When you find other people going in one direction, go in the other, and you will go in the right one." He saw nearly every one else in the clothing business marking their goods in characters, and, true to his philosophy—"Perverse"—marked his goods in plain figures, and he is succeeding. Now, gentlemen, I am going to do the same thing.

"'And, another thing—I am not going to mark just part of them in plain figures. Do you know, I called on a wholesale dry goods man the other day—the President of the concern. He told me that he marked a part of their manufactured goods in plain figures and the rest in characters. I said to him, "You confess that you are only partly honest; in being only half honest you are dishonest." So, gentlemen, I am going to mark our goods in plain figures, and I want you to sell them to everybody at the same price; if you do not, I will not ship them.

"'Now, I thought I was through, but one more idea has occurred to me. By selling our goods at strictly one price I can figure exactly how much money I am making on a given volume of business. Before, this matter of "cuts" made it a varying, uncertain amount; in future there will be certainty as to the amount of profits. And another thing, so sure as I live, if all of you go out and make the same increase that the one who stood out against all of us has made, our business will thrive so that we can afford to sell goods cheaper still. Until to− night I never knew why it was that he took hold of what seemed to me a big business in his predecessor's territory and doubled it the second year. His success was the triumph of common honesty, and we all shall try his plan, for honesty is right, and nothing beats the right.'

"When the vote was taken the second time, every man at the table stood up."

CHAPTER XII. CANCELED ORDERS.

“Do I like cancellations? Well, I guess not!” said a furnishing goods friend, straightening up a little and lighting his cigar as a group of us sat around the radiator after supper one night in the Hoffman House. “I'll tell you, boys, I'd rather keep company with a hobo, than with a merchant who will place an order and then cancel it without just cause. I can stand it all right if I call on a man for a quarter of a century and don't sell him a sou, but when I once make a sale, I want it to stick. This selling business isn't such a snap as most of our employers think. It takes a whole lot of hard knocking; the easy push−over days are all over. When a man lands a good order now it makes the blood rush all over his veins; and when an order it cut out it is like getting separated from a wisdom tooth. Of course you can't blame a Kansas merchant for going back on his orders in a grasshopper year; but it is the fellow who has half a notion of canceling when he buys and afterwards really does cancel, that I carry a club for.

“Usually a fellow who does this sort of funny work comes to grief. I know I once had the satisfaction of playing even with a smart buyer who canceled on me.

“I was down in California. I was put onto a fellow named Johnson up in Humboldt County, who wanted some plunder in my line—the boys, you know, are pretty good to each other in tipping a good chance off to one another. I couldn't very well run up to the place—it was a two− day town—so I wrote Johnson to meet me at 'Frisco at my expense. He came down, bought his bill all right, and I paid him his expense. Luckily, I put a clothing man on and we 'divied' the expense. We treated that fellow white as chalk; we gave him a good time—took him to the show and put before him a good spread.

“Do you know that fellow just simply worked us. He wanted to come to 'Frisco, anyhow, and just thought he'd let me foot the bill. How do I know it? Because he wrote the house canceling the order before he started back home. I figured up how long it would take to get a letter to Chicago and back; and he couldn't have gone home and written the firm so that I could get the notification as soon as I did unless he wrote the cancellation the very night we took him to the theater. I never had a man do me such dirt. I felt like I'd love to give him just one more swell dinner, and use a stomach pump on him.

“But didn't I get beautifully even with Brother Johnson!

“The next season, as a drawing card, I had my packer carry on the side, in his name, a greatly advertised line of shoes. It didn't pay a long commission, but everybody wanted it; and it enabled me to get people into my big towns so that I did not have to beat the brush.

“I had failed to scratch Johnson from my mailing list, so he got a card from my packer—as well as a letter from myself—that if he would meet him in San Francisco his expenses would be paid. He did not know that my packer and myself were really the same man.

“Johnson jumped at the advertised shoe line like a rainbow trout at a 'royal coachman.' It's funny how some merchants get daffy over a little printer's ink, but it does the work and the man who advertises his goods is the boy who gets the fat envelopes. I'd rather go on the road to−day with a line of shoes made out of soft blotting paper, if they had good things said about them in the magazines and if flaming posters went with them than to try to dish out oak−tanned soles with prime calf uppers at half price and with a good line of palaver. It's the lad who sticks type that, when you get right down to it, does the biz.

“The letter which Johnson wrote in reply to the card of my packer went something like this: “'My dear sir: In regard to your favor of the 23d inst., I beg to say that I could use about $2000 worth of your line if you could come up here, providing that I would be the only one that you would sell your line to in my town.

“'Hoping to hear from you soon in regard to this matter, I remain, very truly, ————Johnson.'

“'P.S. If you can't possibly come up, I'll come down.'

“What did I do? Well, I thought the matter over and decided that business was business and, there being no other chance in his town, I would let him come and try to play even on the old score. I wired him to come down, and I thought, as I had him on the run, I'd better put on a pusher. My message read: 'Come down but you must be here to− morrow.'

“Just after my telegram was off—I told the girl to rush it—I called at the office for my mail and, bless me! I

had a letter from another man in the same town.

"Now, say what you will, boys, a man's letter reveals his character. If a man has mean blood in his veins he will spread some of it on the paper when he writes to you. I've seen the pugnacious wrinkles of a bull pup's face many a time wiggling between the lines of a letter. And if there's sunshine in a man's heart that also will brighten up the sheet he writes on.

"The other man in the town wrote about like this:

"'Your postal received and I must say I regret exceedingly that I have just sent in a mail order for your goods. I wish I had known that you were coming, for I always save my orders for the boys on the road when I can. Now, the next time you come to 'Frisco, let me know a few days ahead and I will run down to meet you. I want your goods. My business in your line is steadily increasing. When I started in I just kept them for a side line, but your goods give first class satisfaction, and in the near future I shall handle nothing else. It will take a little time to clean out the other makes, but when I do—by next season—I shall have a nice order for you. I hope to hear from you before you get to the next coast—say a month before. Truly yours,

"They say a 'bird in the hand's worth two in the bush,' but that depends upon the kind of a bird you've got hold of. I'll let go of a tough old owl every time to take a chance at catching a spring chicken. Without a second thought, I decided that I'd risk it on the man who wrote me such a gentlemanly letter rather than deal with the fellow who had canceled on me. Furthermore, I had half an idea that Johnson was making me fair promises only to get the line and cut the other fellow's throat and that maybe he would cancel again. So I immediately sent Johnson a second telegram:

"'Cannot place the line with you. Do not come down.'

"He was anxious for the line and he wired back:

"'Write particulars why you cannot sell me your shoes.'

"Well, wasn't this a chance? My clothing friend was with me again. I told him the story. 'Soak him good and wet!' said he. Together we wrote the following letter, and, you bet your sweet life, I mailed it, signing my packer's name:

"'Sir: You wire me to write you "particulars why" I cannot sell you my line of shoes. Two of my friends at present in the hotel inform me that six months ago you met them here at their expense, were royally entertained by them and that after buying bills of them you almost immediately cancelled your orders, and that you have never offered to return to them the $25.00 they spent for your traveling expenses. These gentlemen are reputable; and, to answer your question specifically and plainly, I do not care to place my line with you because in you I have no confidence, sir.'"

"That was getting even with a vengeance," spoke up the furnishing goods man. "In this canceling business, though, sometimes the merchant has just cause for it. I know I once had a case where my customer did exactly the right thing by canceling his order.

"Along the last part of October, I sold him a of ties—this was down in Mississippi. I sent in a little express order for immediate shipment, and for December first a freight shipment which my man wished for the Christmas trade. I also took his spring order to be sent out February first.

"Now, my man's credit was good. For several seasons he had been discounting his bills. He had the personal acquaintance of our credit man and had made a good impression on him. I always like to have my customers acquainted with our credit man. It's a good thing always for the merchant to do and it's also a good thing for the house to know their trade personally. Makes the man out in the country feel that he's not doing business with strangers.

"There was no reason, then, why there should have been any question in the credit department about making the shipment. The little express order went out all right but, by mistake, the credit man placed the February first shipment and the December first order away in the February first shipment file. This was a clear mistake—no excuse for it. Business men should not make mistakes.

"The first I heard about the matter was about New Year. I was struck dumb when I received notice from the Credit Department that my man had canceled his entire order. The credit man told me in the letter which he sent along with the cancellation notice that he had simply made a mistake in filing the December first order away with the February first shipment, and confessed that he had made a mistake and begged my pardon.

"He was a gentleman with three times as much work on his hands as the firm had the right to expect from him

for the money they paid him, so, although I was much put out because of the cancellation, I really did not have any resentment toward the credit man. If things move along smoothly in a wholesale house, the man in the office and the salesman on the road must pull in double harness. I couldn't quite agree with my friend in the office, though, when he said that my customer, when he failed to receive an invoice soon after the first of December, should have written in and said so. That wasn't the customer's business. It was the business of the house, if they were unable to make the shipment December 1st, to write the man and tell him so.

"Well, there I was! A good day's work had gone to the bad. My order— and it was a good healthy one, too—was canceled and perhaps all future business with a good friend and solid customer was at an end.

"The house had written my friend—his name was Morris—asking him to reinstate the order; but that was like putting bait before a fish at spawning time. He wouldn't take the hook. I knew if there was any reinstating to be had, I must get it.

"Now, Morris was a bully good friend of mine. I really liked him very much, and he liked me. I remember well the first time that I ever struck him. Really, I went around to see him just for a personal call. 'Look here, old fellow,' I said, 'I haven't come around to do any business with you; but one of my old friends, Jack Persey, has told me what a good fellow you are and I've just dropped in to say hello. Come, let's have a cigar.'

"After we'd lighted our cigars and talked a little, I said, 'Well, I'm sorry to get off in such a rush but I must quit you. I must be packing up. My train leaves in about an hour and a half. Now, really Morris (he was such a whole−souled fellow that I found myself, without any undue familiarity, calling him by his first name, after a very few minutes), I don't want to do any business with you. I don't wish to impose my acquaintance on you, but come on over to my sample room and keep me company while I'm packing.'

"I really didn't intend to do any business with him. Some of the very best friends we all have on the road, anyhow, are those to whom we never sell a sou. Morris saw very plainly that I wasn't trying to work him—you can always pick out, anyway, the ring of truth in words you hear. I started to pack up without showing an item or even talking business. My line was displayed, however, and it was really a bird. Morris himself picked up a few samples and threw them down on the table.

"'Say, dos are pretty ennyvay. Sent me a dotzen of each von of dese in the color dey are dere, ant also in black. I vill just gif you a leetle gomplimentary orter on account of Chack. There is no reeson anyvay vy I shouldn't do beesness mit you. You're de first man on de rote dot efer struck me and didn't ask me to buy goots. I don't like the fellow, anyvay, dot I'm buying ties from and his house is not'ing to me. I vill gif you a goot orter next season.' And, sure enough, Morris did give me a good order next season, and for several seasons after that.

"So you can see how I was put out when I got a letter telling me that Morris had canceled the order. I really cared less about the amount of the order than I did about losing his friendship. So I sat down and dictated a letter to him that ran something like this:

"'Dear Morris:

"'"The wordly hope men set their hearts upon
Turns ashes—or it prospers—and anon,
Like snow upon the desert's dusty face,
Lighting a little hour or two, is gone."

"'Our business relationship, Morris, has always been so pleasant that many a time I've hoped it would last always. I cannot forget the kind−hearted and friendly way in which you gave me your first order. I had hoped that the firm I was with would give you the good treatment which your friendship for me deserved; but here they are making a mistake with the very man who, last of all, I would have them offend.

"'Now, Morris, I want you to feel that this is not my fault. I am sure it is not yours. It can be nobody's fault but that of the house. They, like myself, are also really very sorry for this mistake.

"'I enclose you the letter which I received from them in regard to this. Can you not see that they regret this sincerely? Can you not even hear the wail that our office man must have uttered when he dictated the letter? Now, Morris, I really know that my firm holds you in high esteem—and why should they not? You have always patronized them liberally. You have always paid your bills and you have never made yourself ugly toward them in any way.

"'As I say, there is no excuse for this mistake but, if you are willing to pass that all up, Morris, I am sure you would make our credit man, who has made this error, very happy indeed if you would merely wire the house,

"Ship my goods as originally ordered."

"'And, after all, Morris, think this thing over and maybe you will conclude that "'Tis better far to bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of."

"'"Can't be always sunny
Dat's de lesson plain;
For ever' rose, my honey,
Am sweeter fer de rain."

"'Your friend,

"'_____'"

"A good deal of poetry for a business letter," spoke up one of the boys. This pricked the necktie man, who flashed back, "Yes, but if there were more poetry in business, it would be lots more pleasant than it is."

"Well, how did it come out?" I asked.

"It so happened that I had to pass through Morris' town about ten days afterwards. I didn't care anything about reinstating the order for the amount of it, but I really did wish to go in and see my old friend and at least square myself. So I dropped off one day between trains at Morris' town, and went up to see him.

"'Hello,' said he, 'How are you, old man? I'm glad to see you. Say, but dot vas a tandy letter. I've ortered a seventy−five−cent vrame for it.'

"'Well, Morris,' said I, 'you know I'm really very glad that a little difficulty of this kind has come up between us as I like you to know just where I stand. Now, I haven't come here to do anything but just see you. Cut the order clear out—I wish you would. It would teach the house a lesson and make them more careful hereafter. Come on down with me now. It's about supper time and we're going to have a little feed.'

"I really meant every word I said. After we had finished a fried chicken or two, we started back to Morris' store.

"'Say,' said he, 'Haf you got the copy of dot orter I gafe you?'

"I said, 'Why no, Morris, I haven't a copy of it. You have one. Don't you remember that I gave you one?'

"'Yes, but ven I didn't get my goots on time—I kapt vaiting, und vaiting, und vaiting, und still dey ditn't com, I took dot copy and I vas so mad dot I tore it op and trew id in der stofe.'

"'Well, if you wish to look over the copy, Morris, I can easily run down to the depot and tear my tissue paper one out of my order book.'

"'Vell, you go down und get it,' said Morris. 'Dere's some off the Gristmas goots it is too late for me to use, but we'll fix op de Spring shipment som vay.'

"When Morris and I looked over my copy, he cut out a few items of the December 1st shipment but added to the February 1st order a great deal more than he canceled from the other one.

"'Say,' said Morris, 'do you know vy I reinsdadet dot orter. It vas dot letter you sent me.'

"'Well, I thank you very much,' said I.

"'You know, I don't care so much aboud dose "vorldly hopes" and dot "sonshine," but vat dit strike me vas vere you saidt: "It's better fair to bear de ilts ve half don vly to odders dot we know not of." Dot means, Vat's de use of chanching 'ouses.'"

"You can handle some men like that," said a hat man friend who sat with us, but I struck one old bluffer out in South Dakota once that wouldn't stand for any smoothing over. He was the most disagreeable white man to do business with I ever saw. He was all right to talk fishing and politics with, and was a good entertainer. He always treated me decently in that way but when it got down to business he was the meanest son of a gun on earth. A fishing trip for half an hour or the political situation during luncheon is a pretty good thing to talk over, but when it comes to interfering with business, I think it is about time to cut it out.

"My house had been selling this man for several years. He handled a whole lot of goods but it worried the life out of me to get his bill.

"Last time I did business with him he had monkeyed with me all day long, and I had struck him as many as four times to go over to my sample room. If he had made a positive engagement and said that he would see me at twelve o'clock that night, it would have been all right; but he would turn away with a grunt the subject of going to look at samples, not even giving me the satisfaction of saying he didn't want anything at all.

"I felt that I'd spent time enough in the town so, after supper, I brought over a bunch of soft hats under my

arm, and about nine o'clock he looked at them, picked out a few numbers, and said he had to go to lodge. I boned him about straw hats—I was on my spring trip then.

"'Look at them to−morrow,' he grunted.

"I was beginning to get tired of this sort of thing so next morning early I went around to see another man in the town. I'd made up my mind I'd rather take less business from some one else and get it more agreeably; but, to my surprise, I sold this other fellow $1,300, the best order I took on that trip. And easy! I believe he was one of the easiest men I ever did business with; and his credit was A1. He had no objections whatever to my doing business with others in the same town, because he wished his goods put up under his own name rather than with our brands on them, so this really made no interference.

[Illustration: "He came in with his before−breakfast grouch."]

"I finished with him in the morning about 11:30. On going over to my other man's store I found that he was still in bed. Pretty soon he came in with his before−breakfast grouch. It was afternoon before I got him over to my sample room. Meantime I had gone to sell another man and sold him a bunch of children's and misses' goods—such stuff as a clothing house has no use for.

"After I'd taken the dogging of the gruff old codger for a couple of hours—he kicked on everything, the brims being a quarter of an inch too wide or too narrow, and the crowns not shaped exactly right—I finally closed the order and handed him his copy. As he put his hand on the door−knob to go, he cast his eye over a pile of misses' sailors and growled: 'Well, who bought them?'

"I told him that I'd sold a little handful of goods to a dry goods store, knowing there would be no interference as he didn't carry that line of goods.

"'Well, a man that sells me can't do business with no other man in this town,' he grunted, and with this, slammed the door and left me. He didn't know that I'd sold his competitor a $1,300 bill.

"When I was about half through packing up, the old growler's clerk, who was a gentlemanly young fellow, came in and said to me, hesitatingly: 'Old man, I hate to tell you, but the boss told me to come over and say to you not to ship that bill of goods he gave you until he ordered it. He is very unreasonable, you know, and is kicking because you sold some stuff to the dry goods man down the street.'

"'Thank you, Gus,' said I to the clerk. I was mad as fire, but not at him, of course. 'Now, Gus, the old man has sent me a message by you. I'll let you take one back to him. Now, mind you, you and I are good friends, Gus. Tell him I say he can take his business, including this order, and go with it now and forever clean smack back to—well, you know the rest. Then tell him, Gus, that I've sold not only this dry goods man a bill but also his strongest competitor over $1,300 worth of goods. Tell him, furthermore, that I personally appreciate all the favors he has done for me in the past, in a personal way; that I have enjoyed visiting with him; that whenever I come back to this town again in the future, I shall come in to see him; that if I can do him a personal favor in any way, at any time, anywhere, I shall be only too glad to do so, but that, absolutely, our business relationship is at an end.'

"'All right,' said Gus. 'I'll repeat to the old man every word you've said. I'm glad you've called him down. It'll do him good.'

"And you bet your life I tore his order up without sending it in to the house and drew a line through his name on my book, and have never solicited his business since."

"You did him just exactly right," said the necktie man. "While I squared myself with my friend Morris, I was once independent with a customer who cancelled an order on me. He came in to meet me at Kansas City. Two more of the boys were also there then. He placed orders with all of us. His name was Stone. The truth is he came in and brought his wife and boy with him just because he wanted to take a little flyer at our expense. We had written him telling him that we'd pay his expenses if he would come in. He went ahead and took a few hours of our time to place his orders. At the time he did so I merely thought him a good liberal buyer but, as I now look back at the way he bought, he slipped down most too easy to stick.

"Sure enough, in three or four weeks the firm wrote me that Stone had cancelled his order, stating that he believed he had enough goods on hand to run him, that season, but that possibly very late he might reinstate the order.

"The fellow was good so I thought it wouldn't do very much harm to try to get him to take the goods. However, I employed very different tactics from those I used with my friend Morris. I wrote him this way:

"'My dear Brother Stone: I have received a letter from the firm stating that you have cancelled the order which you placed with me in Kansas City. You know not how much I thank you for cancelling this order. It gave me a great deal of pleasure to sell you this bill of goods, and now that you have cancelled it, I want you to be sure and make your cancellation stick because then, sooner than I had really expected, I shall have that same old pleasure over again.

"'It isn't always profit that a man should look for in business. What good does it do him to make a whole lot of money unless he can feel good on the inside? The feel is about all there is in life anyway.

"'Now in future, you go right on as you have in the past, buy your goods from the other fellow. He will not charge you a great deal more for them than I would and your loss will not be very great in that regard; but each time that I come around be sure to take a lot of my time and place an order with me, even if you do cancel it.

"'Don't even trouble yourself about returning the fifteen dollars expense money that was given you, because the pleasure I had with you was worth that much to me alone. I shall square this matter myself with the other boys. No, I won't do that because I'm sure that they feel in this matter just as I do.

"'With very kindest regards, and ever at your service, believe me,
Brother Stone,

"'Truly yours,
"'_____'"

"He wired the house to ship the bill and sent the message paid."

"That was what I call a grafter," said one of the boys.

"Yes, you bet your life," said the wall paper man.

"I myself once cured a man of the cancelling habit. You know there are some merchants over the country who are afflicted with this disease.

"I had heard of a druggist out in Pennsylvania who was noted for placing an order one morning and cancelling it that very night. He had done a trick of this kind on me once and I'd made up my mind that I was going to play even with him. I walked him over to my sample room early in the morning. I had my samples all spread out so that I could handle him quickly. There were a lot of new patterns out that season— flaming reds, greens, cherry colors, blues, ocean greens—all sorts of shades and designs.

"The druggist picked out a cracking good order. He took a copy of it himself in his own book. As we were working the wind turned the sheets of his memo. book and I saw that he had in it a copy of an order in my line to another firm. This he had given only a few days before. Every season this druggist would really buy one big bill of wall paper, but this was his trick: He would look at the line of every man that came along. Sometimes he would place six or eight orders a season. After placing an order he would immediately cancel it. At his leisure he would figure out which order pleased him best and reinstate that one.

"Well, sir, when I finished with him it was close onto luncheon time, but I didn't do anything but go hungry for awhile. I took my notebook, made out his order, as quickly as I could, wired it into the firm (it cost me twelve dollars to do this), and told them to be absolutely sure to put all hands to work on that order and ship it on the four o'clock fast freight that very day. I had to be in town the next day. Soon after breakfast I went into the druggist's store. I caught him back at his desk. I saw him blot the ink on an envelope he had just addressed. About this time a lady came in to get a prescription filled. As the druggist turned his back I quickly lifted the blotter and, seeing that the letter was addressed to my firm, let it cover the envelope again. I knew this was a cancellation letter.

"After the lady had gone out with her medicine, I asked the druggist to show me some hair brushes which were in the case at the other end of the store from the desk. I made up my mind that it was going to take me longer to buy that hairbrush than it did the old man to buy my bill of wall paper. I was getting his time. But I didn't rub my fingers over many bristles before up backed a dray loaded to the guards with the goods from my firm. The drayman came in and handed the druggist the bill of lading.

"'What's this?' said he.

"'I'm treed,' said the drayman. 'They're as heavy as lead.'

[Illustration: "I'm treed," said the drayman, "they're as heavy as lead."]

"With this the drayman rolled the cases into the druggist's store. Well, sir, he was the cheapest looking fellow you ever saw, but he kept the goods, all right, and this cured him of cancelitis."

CHAPTER XIII. CONCERNING CREDIT MEN.

The credit man was the subject of our talk as a crowd of us sat, one Sunday afternoon, in the writing−room of the Palace Hotel at San Francisco. The big green palm in the center of the room cast, from its drooping and fronded branches, shadows upon the red rugs carpeting the stone floor. This was a peaceful scene and wholly unfitting to the subject of our talk.

“I would rather herd sheep in a blizzard,” blurted out the clothing man, “than make credits. Yes, I would rather brake on a night way− freight; be a country doctor where the roads are always muddy; a dray horse on a granite−paved street; anything for me before being a credit man! It is the most thankless job a human being can hold. It is like being squeezed up against the dock by a big steamship. If you ship goods and they're not paid for, the house kicks; if you turn down orders sent in, the traveling man raises a howl. None of it for me. No, sir!”

“I have always been fairly lucky,” spoke up the hat man. “I've never been with but two houses in my life and I've really never had any trouble with my credit men. They were both reasonable, broad−minded, quick−witted, diplomatic gentlemen. If a man's credit were doubtful in their minds, they would usually ask me about him, or even wire me, sometimes, if an order were in a rush, to tell them what I thought of the situation. And they would always pay attention to what I said.”

“Well, you are one in a hundred,” spoke out the clothing man. “You ought to shake hands with yourself. You don't know what a hard time I've had with the various men who've made credits on the goods I have sold.

“The credit man, you know, usually grows up from office boy to cashier, and from cashier to bookkeeper, from bookkeeper to assistant credit man and then to credit man himself. Most of them have never been away from the place they were born in, and about all they know is what they have learned behind the bars of their office windows. You couldn't, for all sorts of money, hire a man who has been on the road, to be a credit man. He can get his money lots easier as a salesman; he has a much better chance for promotion, too. Still, if the salesman could be induced to become a credit man, he would make the best one possible, because he would understand that the salesman himself can get closer to his customer than any one else and can find out things from him that his customer would not tell to any one else and, having been on the road himself, he would know that really about the only reliable source of information concerning a merchant is the salesman himself.

“When a merchant has confidence enough in a man to buy goods from him —and he will not buy goods from him unless he has that confidence—he will tell him all about his private affairs. He will tell him how much business he is doing, how much profit he is making, how much he owes, what are his future prospects, and everything of that kind. The credit man who was once a salesman would also know that these commercial agency books—the bibles of the average credit man—don't amount to a rap. For my own part, I wish old Satan had every commercial agency book on earth to chuck into the furnace, when he goes below, to roast the reporters for the agencies. A lot of them will go there because a lot of reports are simply outright slander. Commercial agencies break many a good merchant. The heads of the agencies aim to give faithful reports, but they haven't the means.

“Now, just for example, let me tell you what they did to a man who did one of my customers when he first started in business. This man had been a clerk for several years in a clothing store over in Wyoming. He was one of the kind that didn't spend his money feeding slot machines, but saved up $3,500 in cold, hard cash. This was enough for him to start a little clothing shack of his own.

“Now, Herbert was a straight, steady boy. I recommended him to my house for credit. He didn't owe a dollar on earth. He bought about five thousand dollars' worth of goods and was able to discount his bills, right from the jump. Now, what do you suppose one of the commercial agencies said about him? Mind you, he had for four or five years run his uncle's store. The uncle was sick and left things really in the hands of Herbert. The agency said he was worth not over five hundred dollars and that he was no good for credit.

“I, of course, learned of this through our office and I told Herbert all about it and insisted that he ought to get that thing straightened out. He said, when I spoke to him of it, 'Why, I did fill out the blanks that they sent in to me—told them the straight of it, exactly what I had, $3,500, and they surely reported it as I gave it to them.' 'No, they haven't done any such thing, Herbert, because I looked into the matter myself when I was last in your office.'

“Well, Herbert had no trouble in getting goods from the houses whose salesmen he knew real well, but he had

to suffer the inconvenience of having a great many orders turned down that he placed—either that or else he was written that he would have to pay cash in advance before shipping. It caused him a whole lot of worry. The boy—well, he wasn't such a boy after all, he was nearly thirty years old and strictly capable—was worried about all this, and I saw it. I told him, 'Look here, Herbert, you must get this thing straightened up. You write the agencies again and tell them just how you stand and that you want them to give you the proper sort of a report.'

"It wasn't a great while before the representative of this agency came around. Herbert went at him hammer and tongs for not doing him justice—then what do you think that fellow did? Nothing!

"In spite of all this Herbert paid up all his bills all right and soon established his credit by being able to give references to first−class firms who stated that he paid them promptly. So, he became independent of the agencies altogether and when they asked him for any statement after that, he told them, 'Go to ——.' Now, of course, this wasn't the thing for him to do.

"A merchant should see that the commercial agencies give him a good report because, if he doesn't, he is simply cutting off his nose to spite his face. If he ever starts to open a new account with some house, the first thing the credit man of that concern will do, when he gets his order, will be to turn to his 'bibles' and see how the man is rated. These commercial agencies are going to say something about a man. That's the way they make their living. If they don't say something good, they will say something indifferent or positively bad. So, what's the merchant to do but truckle to them and take chances on their telling the truth about him?"

"Yes, you're right," chimed in the drygoods man, "but even then, try as hard as he will, the merchant can't get justice, sometimes. One of my customers, who is one of the most systematic business men I know of, for years and years had no report. Half the goods he bought was turned down simply because the agent in his town for the commercial agency was a shyster lawyer who had it in for him. And he had all he could do to retain his credit. Just to show you how good the man was in the opinion of those with whom he did business, let me say that right after he had had a big fire and had suffered a big loss, one firm wired him: 'Your credit is good with us for any amount. Buy what you will, pay when you can.'

"Well, sir, this man was mad as fire at the agencies, and for years and years he would have absolutely nothing to do with them, but I finally told him: 'Look here, Dick; now this thing is all right but there's no use fighting those fellows. Why don't you get what's coming to you?' And I talked him into the idea of getting out after a right rating, and told him how to go about it.

"One day, in another town where he had started a branch store, he met one of the representatives of the agency that had done him dirt, and said to him: 'Now, Mr. Man, I sometimes have occasion to know how various firms that I do business with over the country stand, and if it doesn't cost too much to have your book, I'd like to subscribe.' 'Well, that won't cost you a great deal,' said the agent. My friend subscribed for the agency book, and in the next issue he was reported as being worth from ten to twenty thousand dollars. Another agency soon chimed in and had him listed as worth from five to ten thousand and with third−grade credit. Now, one or the other of these wrong—and the truth of the matter is that both of them had slandered him for years; he hadn't made ten to twenty thousand dollars in ninety days. And just to show you how much good that rating did my friend, he soon began to receive circulars and catalogues galore from houses which, before that time, had turned him down."

"The worst feature of turning down an order," said the drygoods man, "is that when you have an order turned down you also have a customer turned away. I was waiting on a man in the house. He was from out West. He was about half through buying his bill. The account was worth over twelve thousand a year to me. He thought so much of my firm that he had his letters sent in my care and made our store his headquarters while in the city. One morning when he came in to get his mail I saw him open one of his letters and, as he read it, a peculiar expression came over his face. When he had read his mail I asked him if he was ready to finish up. He said to me, 'No, Harry, I want to go over and see your credit man.'

[Illustration: What explanation have you to make of this, sir?]

"I went with him. One of the old man's sons, who had just come back from college, had taken charge of the western credits. The old man would have been a great deal better off if he'd pensioned the kid and put one of the packers in the office, instead. My customer went up to the credit boy and said to him: 'Now, Mr. ——, I've just received a letter from home stating that you've drawn on me for three hundred and eighty−five dollars. What explanation have you to make of this, sir? I have always, heretofore, discounted every bill that I have bought from

this establishment, and this bill for which you have drawn on me is not yet due.'

"'I'll look the matter up,' said the young credit man. He looked over his books a few minutes and then tried to make some sort of an explanation in a half−haughty kind of a way. My customer interrupted him right in the midst of his explanation and said, 'Well, you needn't say anything more about this, sir. Just see what I owe you.'

"This was looked up and my customer right then and there wrote his check for what he owed and said to me:

"'Old man, I'm mighty sorry to have to do this, but I cannot interpret this gentleman's conduct (pointing to the credit man) to mean anything but that my credit is no longer good here. I shall see if there is not some one else in the city who will trust me as I thought that this firm was willing to trust me. This thing hurts me!'

"I couldn't explain matters in any way, and my customer—and my friend!—walked out of the store and has never been back since. That piece of Tom foolery on the part of our snob of a credit man lost the house and me an account worth over twelve thousand dollars a year."

"That fellow," broke in the clothing man, "should have got the same dose that was once given a credit man in the house I used to work for. He had been turning down order after order on good people, for all of us boys. When we came home from our fall trip we were so dissatisfied that we got together and swore that we would not sign a contract with the house unless the credit man they had was fired. We all signed a written agreement to this effect. Also, we agreed, upon our honor, that if one of us was fired for taking the stand, we would all go.

"Now, you know, boys, it is the salesmen that make the house. The house may have a line of goods that is strictly it, but unless they have good salesmen on the road they might as well shut up shop. A salesman, of course, gets along a great deal better with a good line than he does with a poor one, but a wholesale house without a line of first−class representatives cannot possibly succeed. And the house knows this, you bet.

"Well, sir, I was the first salesman the old man struck to make a contract with for the next year. I, had been doing first rate, making a good salary and everything of that kind, and when the old man called me into the sweat−box, he said to me:

"'Well, I suppose we haven't very much to talk over. What you have done has been satisfactory to us, and I hope we've been satisfactory to you. If it suits you we will just continue your old contract.'

"'There will have to be one condition to it,' said I to the old man. 'Well, what's that?' 'I simply will not work for this establishment if the fool credit man that you have here is to continue. He has taken hundreds of dollars out of my pocket this year by turning down orders on good people who are worthy of credit. Now, it doesn't make any difference as to his salary if he turns down good people; in fact, if he is in doubt about any man at all, or even the least bit skittish, what does he do but turn him down? This is nothing out of his jeans, but it's taking shoes away from my babies, and I simply won't stand for it.'

"The long and short of it was that I didn't sign with the old man that day but he soon 'caved' after he had talked with a few more of the boys—one of whom told him point blank that we would all quit unless he gave the credit man his walking papers. And, you bet your life, the credit man went and today he is where he ought to be—keeping books at a hundred a month!"

"It is not alone against the credit man who turns down orders that I have a grudge," said the furnishing goods man, "but also against the fellow who monkeys with old customers. If there is anything that makes a customer sour it is to be drawn on by a firm that he has dealt with for a long time. Some of the merchants out in the country, you know, get themselves into the notion of thinking that the house they deal with really loves them. They don't know what a cold−blooded lot our houses really are. What they're all looking for is the coin and they don't care very much for a man when they believe he can't pay his bills. I know I never felt cheaper in my life than I did last trip. I went into an old customer's store and what should I see upon his shelves but another man's goods. I felt as if somebody had hit me between the eyes with a mallet, for he was a man I had nursed for four or five years and brought him up to be a good customer. He had a sort of a racket store when I started with him—groceries, tin pans, eggs, brooms, a bucket of raw oysters, and all that sort of stuff. One day I said to him, 'Why don't you throw out this junk and go more into the clothing and furnishing goods business? Lots cleaner business and pays a great deal more profit. Furthermore, this line of goods is sold on long datings and you can stretch your capital much further than in handling other lines.'

"Well, sir, he talked with me seriously about the matter and from that time on he began to drop out the tin pan and grocery end of his line. When I saw he was doing this, I asked him to let me have the hook in the ceiling from which for so long had swung his bunch of blackening bananas, so I could have a souvenir of his past folly! I had

worked him up until his account was strictly a good one.

"In fact, he prospered so well with this store that after a while he had started another one. When he did this he, of course, stretched his capital a little and depended upon his old houses to take care of him. He had always discounted his bills in full, sometimes even anticipating payments and making extra discounts.

"I was tickled to sell him about twice as much as usual, on one of my trips. It was just ninety days after this when I got around again and saw the other fellow's goods in the store. When I looked at the strange labels I felt like some fellow had landed me one on the jaw. You know it hurts to lose a customer, especially if he is one that you have fed on the bottle and thinks a great deal of you personally.

"Well, when I saw the other stuff, all I could do was to march right up and say, 'Well, Fred, the other fellow's been getting in his work, I see. What's the matter? The sooner we get through with the unpleasant part of it, the better.' 'Now, there isn't anything the matter with you, old man,' said my customer. 'Come up here in the office. I want to show you how your house treated me.'

"And there he showed me a letter he had received from the house stating that he must pay up his old account before they would ship him any more goods; and the old bill was one which was dated May 1st, four months, and was not due until September 1st. They wrote him this before the first of June, at which time he was entitled to take off six per cent. He simply sent a check for what he owed them and, to be sure, wrote them to cancel his order. There was a good bill and a loyal customer gone—all on account of the credit man."

"Once in a while, though," said the shoe man, "you strike a fellow that will take a thing of this sort good−naturedly, but they are rare. I once had a customer down in Missouri who got a little behind with the house. The credit man wrote him just about the same sort of a letter that your man received, but my friend, instead of getting mad, wrote back a letter to the house, something like this:

"'Dear House: I've been buying goods from you for a long time. I have paid you as well as I knew how. You know I am pretty green. I started in life pulling the cord over a mule and when I made a little money at this I started a butcher shop. My neighbors who sold other stuff, drygoods and things of that sort, it looked to me didn't have much more sense than I, and they lived in nice houses and had sprinklers and flowers in their yards. So it looked to me like that was a good business to go into. I tried my hand at it and have got on fairly well. Of course, I have been a little slow, you know, being fool enough to think everybody honest and to do a credit business myself.

"'Now I really want to thank you for telling me I must pay up before I can get any more goods. I kind of look on you people as my friends, I have dealt with you so long, and if you are getting a little leery about me, why I don't know what in the world the other fellows that don't care anything about me must be beginning to think. When I got your letter telling me to pay up before you would ship the bill I had bought, I felt like I had run into a stone fence, but this lick over the head has really done me a whole lot of good and I am going to go a little more careful hereafter.

"'Just now I am not able to dig up all that I owe but here is my check for a hundred. Now, I want to keep out of the hole after this so you had better cut down the order I gave your man about a half. After all, the best friend that a man has is himself, and hereafter I am going to try a little harder to look after Number One.

"Yours truly,

"'___'"

"Another thing that makes it hard for us," said the furnishing man, "is to have the credit man so infernally long in deciding about a shipment, holding off and holding off, brooding and brooding, waiting and waiting, and wondering and wondering whether they shall ship or whether they shall not, and finally getting the notion to send the goods just about the time a man countermands his order. A countermand, you know, is always a pusher and I would advise any merchant who really wants to get goods, to place an order and then immediately countermand it. Whenever he does this the credit man will invariably beg him to take the stuff. Oh, they're a great lot, these credit men.

"I know I once sold a man who, while he was stretching his capital to the limit pretty far, was doing a good business and he wanted some red, white, and blue neckties for Fourth of July trade. I had sold him the bill in the early part of May. About the 2Oth of June, I received a letter from the credit man asking me to write him further information about my man. Well, I gave it to him. I sent him a telegram that read like this: 'Ship this man today by express sure. Heavens alive, he is good. You ought to make credits for a coffin house for a while.'"

"The credit man is usually bullet−headed about allowances for another thing," said the shoe man. His kind will fuss around about making little allowances of a couple of dollars that come out of the house and never stop to think we often spend that much on sundries twice over every day. I had a man a great while ago to whom I had sold a case of shoes that were not at all satisfactory. I could see that they were not when I called upon him and I simply told him right out, 'Look here, Mark, this stuff isn't right. Now, I wish to square it. What will make this right?' 'Oh,' he said, 'I don't think these shoes are worth within two dollars a dozen of what you charged me.' 'No, they're not worth within three dollars,' said I. 'I will just give you a credit bill for three dollars and call it square.' It was nothing more than right because the stuff was bum.

"I came into the house soon after this and, passing the credit memo, into the office, the credit man howled as if I were pulling his jaw tooth. It hurt him to see that little three dollars go on the profit and loss account. 'Well, I won't insist upon it,' said I. 'I will just ask the man to return the goods.' 'All right,' he said.

"When I wrote out to my man, I told him the truth about the matter,— that the house had howled a little because I had made the credit allowance, and to just simply fire the stuff right back, but not to forget to ask that he be credited with the amount of freight which he had already paid on the case of shoes. It was just a small item, but what do you think the credit man said when I showed him my customer's letter, asking for the freight?'

"He said, 'Well, that fellow's mighty small.'"

"I have never had any of these troubles that you boys are talking about," said the hat man.

"Lucky boy! Lucky boy!" spoke up the clothing man in his big, heavy voice.

"Yes, you bet," chimed in the others.

"It's a strange thing to me," chimed in the clothing man, "that credit men do not exercise more common sense. Now, there is one way, and just one way, in which a credit department can be properly conducted. The credit man and the man on the road must work in double harness and pull together. The salesman should know everything that is going on between his house and his customer. And when it comes to the scratch, his judgment is the judgment that should prevail when any matter of credits is to be decided upon. The salesman should have a copy of every letter that his customer writes his house, and he should be sent a duplicate of every line that the house writes to the customer. He should be kept posted as to the amount of shipment the house makes, and he should be notified whenever the customer makes a remittance. This puts the salesman in position to know how much to sell his customer, and also when to mark the new bill he sells for shipment. At the time of making the sale, it is very easy for the man on the road to say to his customer, 'Now look here, friend, as you haven't been quite able to meet your past obligations promptly, suppose that we stand off this shipment for a little while and give you a chance to get out of the hole. I don't want to bend your back with a big load of debt.' For saying this, the customer will thank his salesman; but the house cannot write the letter and say this same thing without making a customer hot.

"And another thing: If a salesman has shown himself strictly square in his recommendations, the salesman's recommendations regarding a shipment should be followed. The salesman is the man—and the one man —who can tell whether his customer is playing ball or attending to business. Now, for example, not a great while ago, I saw a merchant that one big firm in this country thinks is strictly good, playing billiards on the Saturday before Christmas. If there is any time on earth when a retail merchant should be in his store, it is on this day, but here was this man, away from his store and up at the hotel, guzzling high balls and punching ivory. That thing alone would have been enough to queer him with me and if I had been selling him and he was not meeting his bills promptly, I should simply tell the house to cut him off.

"The salesman also knows how much business a man is doing,—whether it is a credit business and all the other significant details. The merchant will take the traveling man that he buys goods from, and throw his books and his heart and everything wide open, and tell him how he stands. Even if he is in a little hole of some kind, it is of the traveling man that he asks advice as to how to get out.

"Again, the traveling man knows all about the trade conditions in his customer's town; whether there has been a good crop and prices high; whether the pay roll is keeping up or not; whether there is some new enterprise going to start that will put on more men and boom things. He knows all about these things, and he is on the spot and has a personal interest in finding out about them, if he is honest, and most salesmen are. It is to his interest to be so. And he can give information to the credit department that nobody else can.

"The report of a salesman to his firm is worth forty times as much as these little printed slips that have been

sent in by some ninny, numskull reporter for a commercial agency. These fellows, before they go around soliciting reports from merchants, have usually been lily− fingered office boys who have never been in a place where a man can learn much common sense until they have grown too old to get on to things that have come in their way."

"Yes, you bet," spoke up the furnishing goods man. "They are the fellows who do us boys on the road a whole lot of harm. If the agencies wanted to get men who would know how to secure good, sound reports from merchants, they should hire first−class salesmen and send them out instead of office boys.

"The credit man," he continued, "should do another thing. He should not only send to the salesman the letter he writes, but he should confer with the man on the road before he writes. What he should do, if the references the merchant gives return favorable reports and the salesman recommends the account, he should, without going any further, pass out an order to save himself a whole lot of worry. But it matters not how bad are the reports from any and all sources, the credit man should write the salesman if he is near, or even wire him if he is far away, laying before him the facts and asking for further information and judgment. I once asked our credit man to do this but he kicked because a telegram would cost the house four bits. He hadn't stopped to think that it cost me out of my own pocket from ten to twenty dollars expenses on every order I took. Oh, they are wise, these credit men!

"It is strange, too, that credit men do not average better than they do. If the heads of firms really knew what blunders their credit men make, I believe that two−thirds of them would be fired tomorrow. There isn't any way of getting at their blunders except through the kicking of the traveling man and when he makes a howl, the heads of the house usually dismiss him with, 'You sell the goods and we'll attend to the rest.'

"A really 'broad minded, quick witted, diplomatic, courteous credit man,' as you say, is worth a great deal to a house. They are almost as rare as roses on the desert. Now, just to show you how the credit man and the salesman can pull together, let me give you an example.

"I sold a man a fair bill of goods. I knew he was a straightforward, square, capable man of good character. He was a pusher. I was in a rush and I took from him just a brief statement of his affairs. I wrote the house that I thought well of the man but didn't especially recommend him. You see, if you recommend strongly every man you sell, it is the same as recommending none. So, unless it comes to a hard pinch, I say no more than is necessary. Our credit man got the agency reports on this man, which made him out as no good and having no capital, and a whole lot of things of that sort and he wrote the man refusing to ship the bill. It looked to him that this man's condition was so hopeless that it was unnecessary for him to write me. He simply turned the order down straight out. When I came in and went over my list of turn−downs, I simply broke right out and said to the credit man, 'Here, you've made a bull on this.' 'Do you really think so?' said he. 'Heavens alive, yes! I know it. Why, this fellow made five thousand dollars last year on a saw mill that he has. He is in a booming country. Maybe he had a little bad luck in the past but he is a hustler and sinks deep into the velvet every time he takes a step now.' 'Why, I am awfully sorry. What shall I do about it?' 'Leave it to me,' said I.

"I wrote out to my man and told him the straight of it, that the agencies had done him a great injustice, and for him to write me personally exactly how he stood and that I would see things through for him in the office; that my house meant him no harm; that he was a stranger to them, but upon my recommendation, if his statement were anything like what I thought it should be, they would fill the order. At the same time, I suggested that the bill be cut about half for the first shipment.

"Well, sir, that man sent me in his statement showing that he not only had merchandise for which he owed very little, but also over four hundred dollars in the bank. I remember the amount. His statement showed that he had a net worth of nearly eleven thousand dollars,—and that man told the truth. Now, this information he would give me direct, but the house was not able to obtain it elsewhere.

"Now, this is a case, you know, where there is now good feeling all around and this is so just because the credit man paid attention to the salesman."

The outer door of the hotel was opened. In blew a gust of wind. The green leaves of the big palm rustled noisily as we scattered to our rooms, thankful we were not credit men.

CHAPTER XIV. WINNING THE CUSTOMER'S GOOD WILL.

To win the customer's good will is the aim of every successful salesman.

"Ah, but how can I do this?" asks the new man.

The ways must be as many as the men he meets. The dispositions of men are as varied as their looks. A kind word will win one man and a bluff another. A generous deed will go right into the heart of one merchant; another will resent it, thinking that the man who does him a favor seeks only to buy his good will. The one thing, however, that the man on the road must do, and always do, is to gain the confidence of the man with whom he seeks to do business. His favor will as surely follow this as day follows night. The night may sometimes be long, like that at the North Pole, but when day does finally dawn it will also be of long duration. The man whose confidence it is slow for you to gain, will probably prove to be the man whose faith in you will last the longest.

Then, the salesman must not only have the knack of getting the good will of his customer on first sight, but he must also possess patience and, if need be, let confidence in himself be a slow growth. He must do business from the jump when he starts out with samples but, to be truly successful, his business must always grow.

A little group of us, having come back from our trips, fell in together one day at luncheon in Chicago. Our meeting was not planned at all, but before the first of us had forgotten the sting of the tabasco on our Blue Points, so many old friends had foregathered that we had our waiters slide two tables together. There was quite a bunch of us. The last one to join the party was a dry goods man. He was a jolly good fellow.

"Hello! Ed, Hello!" spoke up all the boys at once. "How are you? Just home? Sorry to hear your old customer out at Columbus finally had to quit business," said the clothing man.

"Yes; so am I," said Ed. "He was a mighty hard man for me to get started with but when once I landed him he was one of the most faithful customers I had. Do you know that for more than eight years he never bought a sou in my line from any other man? It's too bad that he had to leave this world. He was a fine old gentleman. I'll never forget, though, the first time I sold him. I had been calling on him for three or four years. His town was one of the first ones I made when I started on the road—I was not quite twenty, then.

"He always treated me courteously—he was a Southerner, you know—but I couldn't get next to him to save my life. One day as I walked toward his store, a little German band stationed itself just before his door and started in to play Yankee Doodle. I didn't pay any attention to this at the time, but when I went up to shake hands with the old gentleman, as usual, I asked him if there was something in my line he wanted. For the first time in his life he was uncivil toward me. He said, 'No, suh, there is not,' and he turned and walked away. Well, there was nothing left for me to do but to scoot as soon as I could.

"I made a sneak and went into another store but soon I saw there was nothing there for me and I thought I would run over to the hotel, get my traps together and skip town by the next train. I had to pass by the old man's door again. The little German band was still there. They had quit playing Yankee Doodle but were going it good and hard on 'Marching Through Georgia.' I happened to look into the old man's store and he was pacing up and down behind the counter. A bright idea struck me. I went up to the leader of the band and said, 'Look here, Fritz, can you play Dixie?'

"'Deekse?' said the big, fat Bavarian. 'Vas iss dass?'

"I didn't know much German but I whistled the air and made him understand what I wanted.

"Ja wohl,' said he.

"'Then, here,' said I, handing him a cart wheel, 'just you stay right here and give me a dollar's worth of Dixie,—a whole dollar's worth, mind you!'

"Well, he must have understood me all right, for the band promptly began to play Dixie. I didn't know that the old gentleman had seen me talking to the band leader, but he had come to the front door to order the band to move on shortly after I came up.

"I simply stood there, leaning against the store in the sunshine, while the German band blowed away. Well, sir, the fellow that played the clarionet—when he got down to the lively part of the tune— certainly did make that little instrument sing. They didn't know what Dixie meant but they played it to a fare−ye−well, just the same!

"After a while the old man came to the front door. He saw me standing there in the sunshine. There was a

smile on his face as broad as Lake Michigan. Joy spread over his countenance in waves. When he saw me leaning up against the store, he came right out where I was and said, 'Look hyah, suh; I was pow'ful uncivil to you this mo'nin', suh. I want to beg yo' pa'don. No gentleman has a right to insult another, but I was so infernally mad this mo'nin' when you spoke to me, suh, that I couldn't be civil. That confounded Yankee tune just riled me. You know, I was an old confed'rate soldier, suh. The wah is all ovah now and I'm really glad the niggers are free. The country's lots bettah off as it is now. Since I've been up hyah in this country I've begun to think that Abe Lincoln was a good man and a fair man, and a friend to the nation; but, confound it! ever' time I hyah 'Yankee Doodle' or 'Marchin' Through Georgia,' suh, I put on mah unifohm again and want to fight. It's pow'ful ha'd fo' a man that has woh the gray, suh, to forget the coloh of his old clothes, try as ha'd as he will. I want to be broad−minded, but, confound it! it seems that I cyan't, suh.'

"'Well, you are ahead of me just one generation,' said I. 'I was born in the North and raised up here but my father was a Southern soldier.'

"'What!' said the old man. 'Why didn't yo' tell me this befoh, suh? Hyah, I've been treatin' yo' like a dog, suh, all this time. And your father was a confed'rate soldier, suh?'

"'Yes, sir,' said I. 'He was under Jackson.'

"'What! Stomal Jackson? Why, suh, a greater man than Stomal Jackson nevah lived, suh. He was a gentleman clean to the co'. Come right in, suh, and sit down. I want to talk to yo' some mo'.

"'Now, you are goin' to pa'don me, suh, fo' my rudeness this mo'nin'. I want you to say that you will.'

"'Why, to be sure, Colonel,' said I. 'I certainly wouldn't blame you for the same feeling that I know my father had as long as he lived.'

"The little Bavarian band, according to my instructions, kept on playing Dixie so long that the fellow who blew the clarionet began to skip notes and puff. I went out and told them that that was enough of that tune and switched them onto S'wanee River. To the tune of this old air, the Colonel marched me up to his house for dinner.

"We didn't say a word about business, of course, until after we had returned to the store. When we came back there, the old Colonel said to me, 'Now, look hyah,—let me get yo' first name.'

"'Ed,' said I.

"'Well, yo'll have to let me call yo' "Ed." Yo're lots younger'n I am. I can't do any business with yo' this trip. I have my promise out. I told the man that I've been buyin' dry goods from that I'd give him my o'der fo' this fall but I don't think as much of him as I do of you, and hyeahaftah I am going to give you my business. I know that yo'll see that yo' house treats me right and I would ratheh deal with a man anyway that I have confidence in, suh. Now, you needn't hurry, Ed, about gettin' around hyah next season, suh, because, sho's yo' bawn, upon the wo'd of a Southern gentleman, suh, yo' shall have my business.'"

"You sold him next time?" asked one of the boys.

"You bet your life I did," said Ed. "That man's word was good."

"He was a splendid old gentleman," spoke up another one of the boys.

"Yes," said the clothing man, "I haven't been there for four or five years. He used to have a lovely little girl that sometimes came down to the store with him."

"Well," broke in Ed, "I'm glad that somebody besides myself has a good opinion of her for she is to be my wife next month."

"Well, good luck to you and lots of happiness," chimed in all the boys.

"When once you get the good will of one of those southerners," remarked the wallpaper man, "you have it for all time. I don't wish to wave the bloody shirt—I am a northerner, myself—but these northern houses somehow don't know how to handle the southern trade. I travel down in Louisiana and Mississippi, and I really dodge every time that one of my customers tells me he is going into the house. Once I started a customer down in the Bayou country. I was getting along well with him and he was giving me a share of his business. One season, however, he came into the house. I didn't know anything about this until I was down there on my next trip. I went to see him, as usual, expecting at least to get a fair order, but when I asked him to come over to my sample room he said, 'Now, Jack, I'd really like to go oveh and do some business but I've already bought my goods. I was in to see yo' house and when I asked the young man at the do'h to see the membahs of yo' firm, he went away fo' a minute or two and when he came back, he said, without bein' at all polite about it, "They're busy." I didn't say anything mo'h to the young man but I turned on my heel and went out the do'h. It made me so mad that I do believe the spahks flew

right out of me. I made up my mind I wouldn't have anythin' mo'h to do with such people and that I would buy mah wall papah in New Yo'k when I got down theah. Now, I'm mighty sorry about this, Jack, but I really cyan't pat'onize a conce'n that treated me wuss'n a niggeh.'

"I tried to explain that the members of my firm were very busy, and that they would have been only too glad to see him had they known who he was, but I couldn't do anything with the old gentleman because, he said, that he didn't wish to deal with people that would treat anybody that way. He said he thought every man should at least receive gentlemanly treatment."

"And you bet he's right about that," spoke up one of the boys.

"Yes, he was," said Jack. "Still it was hard for me to let go. I of course didn't say anything more about business to him but there wasn't much going on that day, although it was Saturday, and we visited quite a while. You know they always have chairs in the back end of stores down south and a customer who comes in to buy something is always asked to have a seat before anything is said about business. It's a good, old sociable way and although it's a little slow, I like it. Traveling is pleasant in the south, whether a man does business or not, because he always receives courteous treatment.

"As we were talking along I asked the old gentleman where his little girl was that I had seen around the store on previous trips.

"'Well, Jack,' said he, 'I'm pow'ful sorry to tell you but I'm afraid she's a cripple for life. A hoss threw her and stepped on her leg an' broke it ve'y badly neah the knee. She has her knee now in a plaster Paris cast but I'm afraid she'll be lame as long as she lives.'

"Well, sir, she was a pretty, sweet little girl, and when her father told me about her misfortune I was very sorry for him. He couldn't keep from crying when he told me about it. I couldn't say much but I felt mighty sorry. It isn't so bad for a boy to be crippled but if there's anything that goes through me it is to see a beautiful little girl walking along on crutches.

"I told the old gentleman goodbye and started down to the hotel. A block or two away I saw a flower store. I said to myself, 'Well, my firm has treated my friend wrong but that's no reason why I should have anything against him. I don't blame him a bit. I'm just going to send a bouquet up to the little girl anyhow.'

"So over at the flower store I passed out a five dollar bill and wrote on the card that I sent with the Marechal Niel roses, 'From a friend of your father's.' "Now, I didn't have business in my eye, boys, when I did this. It was right from the heart. I was going to Sunday in that town anyway and get out on a train early Monday morning. There was a tough hotel in the next town I was to strike.

"That night, while I was at supper, the clerk came into the dining room and told me that somebody wanted to talk to me over the telephone. It was the little girl's father. He said to me, 'Jack, I want to thank you very much for those flowers that you sent up to Mary. She's proud of them and sends you a kiss; and I want to tell you that I'm proud of this, Jack,—but just to thank you oveh the wyah isn't enough. I wanted to find out if you were at the hotel. I want to come down and shake yo' hand. Are yo' going' to be hyah tomorrow?' I told him I was going to Sunday there. 'Well,' said the old gentleman, 'I will see you tomorrow mo'nin'. I'll come down befo' I go to chu'ch.'

"When he came down the next morning I was up in my room where my samples were. If I could have sold him a hundred thousand dollars I wouldn't have asked him to look at anything, but I did ask him to have a chair and smoke a cigar with me. My samples were in the room where he couldn't keep from seeing them and after he had thanked me again and again and told me how much he appreciated my kindness, he fingered over a line of goods of his own accord, asking me the prices on them.

"I said to him, 'Now, look here, you probably don't wish to price any goods today, as you are going to church. These are worth so much and so much, but if you wish to forgive and forget the discourtesy my house has shown you,—their line of goods is first−class; there's none better in the country; nothing can be said on that score against them,—I'll stay over tomorrow and show you.'

"'No, I won't have you do that,' said my friend—he was my friend then—'Time is money to a man on the road. If I was going to do any business with yo' I ought to have done it yesterday. I have spoiled a day fo' you an' I don't believe the Lord will hold anything against me if I do business with you today. You know he makes allo'ances when the ox gets in the mire, so get out yo' book, if you will, suh,—an' I will give you an ohdeh.'

"Before I was through with him my bill amounted to over six thousand dollars, the biggest order I ever took in my life,—and do you know, we finished it in time for both of us to get up to church just as the preacher was

reading his text, and, singularly enough, the text of the sermon that day was, 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.' I half believe my friend had arranged this sermon with the minister."

"Even if I have lost the twang in my voice," spoke up the southerner, a furnishing goods man.

"Oh, come off!"

"Lost it?" said the clothing man.

"Yes, I reckon I have. I've been up no'th long enough. Well, people down in my country are warm hearted and courteous, but all the goodness in the world doesn't dwell with them. I've found some pow'ful good people up no'th. Raisin' has something to do with a man, but that isn't all. We find good men whereveh we go, if we look fo' them right. Your tellin' about sendin' flowe's to that little girl reminds me of the time when I once sent some flowe's, but instead of sending them to a girl, I sent them to a big crusty old man. This man was, to a great extent, an exception to the rule that I have just laid down. That is, he was cranky and ha'd to get next to for nearly ever'body, and sometimes he was pretty rough with me. But I handled him fairly well and always got business out of him, although sometimes I had to use a little jiu jitsu to do it.

"Several seasons ago—haven't you heard this story, boys?—I was on my way up to his town, Deadwood. While I was down at Broken Bow, I got a telegram from the house which read, "Sam Shoup dead"—that was one line—and on the next line the message read: "Wood wants goods."

"I thought this was rather funny when I got hold of the message for I hadn't sold this man Wood for several seasons. He had been a little slow and the house had drawn on him, and I lost him. But I thought maybe things were all patched up again and so I hur'ied on up into the Hills and over to Hot Springs to see Wood. He handled lots of goods and I wanted to get there before somebody else nipped him. Besides, I could double back and catch Chadron and those towns along there on my return.

"I was ve'y sor'y to heah that my friend Sam had croaked. You know, after a man has turned up his toes you can see a whole lot of good points about him that always escaped yo' notice befo'; so at Broken Bow I wiahed the flo'ist up in Deadwood to send ten dollars worth of roses with my card on over to Mrs. Shoup, that I would see him in a few days and pay him fo' them. I also sent a telegram to the widow, extending my heartfelt sympathy.

"Well, sir, when I got into the Springs I had my trunk brought right up, opened my samples, befo' I went over to see my friend Wood. When I went into his sto' he said to me, 'Well, Mark, what are you doing here?' 'What am I doing heah,' said I, 'Why, the house telegraphed me you wanted some goods.' 'Why, I wouldn't buy any goods from yo' house if I were a millionaire and could get them for ten cents on the dollar. They turned me down once good and ha'd and that's enough fo' me. Where's the telegram? I think you're stringin' me.'

"'No; nothing of the kind,' said I, and I handed him the telegram. Laugh? I never heard a fellow laugh like he did in my life.

"'Why, can't you read?'

"'Sure! This telegram reads: "Sam Shoup dead. Wood wants goods."'

"'No,' said Wood. 'That telegram says that Sam Shoup, Deadwood, wants goods. That hasn't anything to do with me.' And do you know, boys, that's the first time that I could understan' that telegram?

"It was such a good joke, howeveh, that I did jolly Wood into giving me an o'deh. From the Springs I went right up to Deadwood. When I met Sam in his sto' he said to me, 'Vell, Mark, vat are you senting my vife vlowers for, and vat are you extenting your heartfelt sympat'y aboud?'

"I showed Sam the telegram.

"'Vell, vell, vell. I nefer had a ting to happen like dot in my life,' said he. 'Now, I know you are my frient. If you had send dose vlowers while you knew I vas alife, I would have t'ought you done it to sell me a bill but you send 'em ven you t'ought I vas deat. Ged op your stuff, Mark, you bet your life I haf a bill for you. I will make it dobble vat I t'ought I vould. You are de only man dat has proved he vas my frient.'"

"Did I ever tell you how I got on the south side of Ed Marks?" said Sam Wood. We had nearly all heard this story before, but still it was a pleasure to get Wood started, so we all urged him to proceed.

"Well, it came about this way," said Sam, squaring himself in his chair, as we lit our cigars. "It was in the old flush days, you know, Goodness! How I wish we had some more mining camps now like Ed's old town. Business was business in those days—to sell a man ten thousand in clothing was nothing! Why, I've sold Ed as much as twenty−five thousand dollars in one season. His account alone, one year, would have supported me. I know one time he came into our store and I took him upstairs and sold him the whole side of the house—overcoats that

stacked up clear to the ceiling, and he bought them quick as a flash. He just looked at them. He said, 'How much for the lot?' I gave him a price, and before I could snap my finger he said, 'All right, ship them out. Send about a fourth by express and the others right away by freight.'"

"Yes, but how did you start him, Sam?"

"Oh, I'm just going to get to that now. I was something of a kid when I started out west. I've always been a plunger, you know. Of course I've cut out fingering chips for a long time now, but there was no stake too high for me in those days. It cost a whole lot of money to travel out west when I first struck that country. It was before the time when clothing houses sent out swatches in one trunk. They weren't such close propositions then as now. They're trying to put this clothing business now on a dry goods basis.

"Well, I carried fourteen trunks and five hundred wouldn't last me more than two weeks. I just cashed a draft before I struck Ed's town. I had heard that he was a hard man to handle and I didn't know just exactly how to get at him, but luck was with me.

"The night I got into town, I went into the den out from the office. You know that in those days the hotels would board suckers for nothing if they would only play their money. I knew Ed by sight and I saw him standing by the faro table. 'Ah, here's my chance,' said I. I pulled out my roll and asked the dealer to give me two hundred in chips. I played him twenty on a turn and then said to the dealer, 'What's your limit?' The roof's off,' said he. 'All right, 250 on the bullet,' said I, sliding over. '250 goes,' said he. I lost. I repeated the bet. I lost again. By this time they began to crowd around the table. I didn't see Ed then at all, you know, except out of the corner of my eye. I could see that he was getting interested and I saw him put his hand down in his pocket. I lost another 250. Three straight bets of 250 to the bad, but I thought I might just as well be game as not and lose it all at one turn as well as any other way, if I had to lose. All I was playing for was to get an acquaintance with Ed anyhow and that was easily worth 500 to me if I could ever get him into my sample room, and I knew it. Gee! Those were great old times then.

"Well, I planked up the fourth 250, and won. Then I let the whole 500 lay and—"

"You are pipe dreaming, Wood," spoke up one of the boys.

"Jim, I can prove this by you. You've seen worse things than this, haven't you?"

"Bet your life, Wood," and Jim whispered to one of the boys, 'Wood can prove anything by me.'

"I let the 500 lay on a copper and I won. From that time on I made no bet for less than half a thousand. At one time I had the dealer pretty close to the bank but I didn't quite put him ashore.

"Well, to make a long story short, when I quit I was just a thousand to the good. Next day was Sunday. There was a picnic out a mile from town. I said:

"'Well, gentlemen, I've done my best to relieve my friend here of all he has, but I can't do it. I am a little to the good and I want you all to go as my guests tomorrow to the picnic. In on this?' said I, and Ed, among others, nodded.

"I didn't tell him who I was and I didn't ask him who he was. I took it for granted if he said he would go along, he would. Next day a whole van load of us went out to the picnic. We had a bully good time. When we got into the wagon I introduced myself to all the gentlemen, not telling them what my business was. When Ed told me his name, he said, 'I'm a resident of this town in the clothing business. Where are you from?' I said, 'I'm from Chicago and I'm in the clothing business, too, but don't let's talk business. We're out for pleasure today.' 'Well, that suits me,' said Ed, but when we got back to town that night I dropped the rest of the bunch and asked him in to supper with me. Nothing too good for him, you know. And while he was under the spell I took him into my sample room that night. You ought to have seen the order that fellow gave me. It struck the house so hard when I sent it in to them that they wired me congratulations."

"Are you still selling your friend Rubovitz, Johnnie?" asked our friend, who had just told us his story, of one of his competitors.

"Sure," said Johnnie, "and the boy, too. Yes, why shouldn't I?"

"Well, I guess you should," said Wood.

"Yes! when I was in the old man's store on this last trip, I felt really sorry for a first−tripper who struck him to look at his clothing. That fellow hung on and hung on. I was sitting back at the desk and he must have thought I was one of the partners because I was the first man he braced and I referred him to the old gentleman."

"Well, wasn't that sort of a dangerous thing for you to do?" asked one of the boys.

"Not on your life. You don't know why it is I have the old man so solid. I've got the hooks on him good and hard, you know."

"Well, how's that?"

"Oh, it came about this way," said he. "When I was down in Kansas City a few years ago, when I had finished selling Ruby,—as I always called him, you know—(he came in from out in the country to meet me this time) I asked him how my little sweetheart was getting on. She, you know, was his little daughter Leah. She was just as sweet as she could be,—great big brown eyes and rich russet cheeks, black curls, bright as a new dollar and sharp as a needle.

"'O, she iss a big goil now,' said my friend Ruby. 'Say,' said he, 'who vass dot yong feller in the room here a few minutes ago?' He referred to a young friend of mine who had chanced to drop in. 'De reeson I ask iss I am huntin' for a goot, reliable, hart−workin' Yehuda (Jewish) boy for her. I vant her to get married pretty soon now. She iss a nice goil, too.'

"'How about a goy (Gentile), Ruby?' said I.

"'No, that vont vork. Kein yiddishes Madchen fur einen Goy und keine Shickse fur einen yiddishen Jungen.' (No Hebrew girl for a Gentile boy; no Gentile girl for a Hebrew boy.)

"'All right, Ruby,' said I. He was such a good, jolly old fellow, and while he was a man in years he was a boy in actions,—and Ruby was the only name by which I ever called him. Nothing else would fit. 'All right, Ruby,' said I, 'I believe I just know the boy for Leah.'

"'Veil, you know vat I will do. I don'd care eef he iss a poor boy; dot is all ride. I haf money and eef I ged the ride boy for my goil, I vill set him op in peezness. Dot's somet'ing for you to vork for— annodder cost'mer,' said he—the instinct would crop out.

"Well, sir, I've got to make this story short," said Johnny, pulling out his watch. "I found the boy. He was a good, clean−cut young fellow, too, and you know the rest."

"You bet your life I do," said Sam. "Two solid customers that buy every dollar from you."

"And," continued Johnny, "Leah and Abie are as happy as two birds in a nest. I don't know but these marriages arranged by the old folks turn out as well as the others anyhow."

"It's not alone by doing a good turn to your customer that you gain his good will," said the hat man. "Not always through some personal favor, but with all merchants you win by being straight with them. This is the one thing that will always get good will. Now, in my line, for example, new styles are constantly cropping out and a merchant must depend upon his hat man to start him right on new blocks. A man in my business can load a customer with a lot of worthless plunder so that his stock will not be worth twenty−five cents on the dollar in a season or two. On the other hand, he can, if he will, select the new styles and keep him from buying too many of them, thereby keeping his stock clean.

"Yes, and this same thing can be done in all lines," spoke up two or three of the boys.

"Yes, you bet," continued the hat man, "and when you get a man's good will through the square deal you have him firmer than if you get his confidence in any other way."

"Sure! Sure!" said the boys, as we dropped our napkins and made for our hats.

CHAPTER XV. SALESMEN'S DON'TS.

Salesmen are told many things they should do; perhaps they ought to hear a few things they should not do. If there is one thing above all others that a salesman should observe, it is this:

Don't grouch!

The surly salesman who goes around carrying with him a big chunk of London fog does himself harm. If the sun does not wish to shine upon him—if he is having a little run of hard luck—he should turn on himself, even with the greatest effort, a little limelight. He should carry a small sunshine generator in his pocket always. The salesman who approaches his customer with a frown or a blank look upon his face, is doomed right at the start to do no business. His countenance should be as bright as a new tin pan.

The feeling of good cheer that the salesman has will make his customer cheerful; and unless a customer is feeling good, he will do little, if any, business with you.

I do not mean by this that the salesman should have on hand a full stock of cheap jokes—and pray, my good friend, never a single smutty one; nothing cheapens a man so much as to tell one of these—but he should carry a line of good cheerful wholesome talk. "How are you feeling?" a customer may ask. "Had a bad cold last night, but feel chipper as a robin this morning." "How's business?" a customer may inquire. "The, world is kind to me," should be the reply. The merchant who makes a big success is the cheerful man; the salesman who—whether on the road or behind the counter—succeeds, carries with him a long stock of sunshine.

An old−time clothing man who traveled in Colorado once told me this incident:

"I used to have a customer, several years ago, over in Leadville," said he, "that I had to warm up every time I called around. His family cost him a great deal of money. The old man gave it to them cheerfully, but he himself would take only a roll and a cup of coffee for breakfast, and, when he got down to the store he felt so poor that he would take a chew of tobacco and make it last him for the rest of the day. Actually, that man didn't eat enough. And his clothes—well, he would dress his daughters in silks but he would wear a hand−me−down until the warp on the under side of his sleeves would wear clear down to the woof. He would wear the bottoms off his trousers until the tailor tucked them under clear to his shoe tops. Smile? I never saw the old man smile in my life when I first met him on my trips. It would always take me nearly a whole day to get him thawed out, and the least thing would make him freeze up again.

"I remember one time I went to see him—you recall him, old man Samuels—and, after a great deal of coaxing, got him to come into my sample room in the afternoon. This was a hard thing to do because if he was busy in the store he would not leave and if he wasn't busy, he would say to me, 'Vat's de use of buying, Maircus? You see, I doan sell nodding.'

"But this time I got the old man over to luncheon with me—we were old friends, you know—and I jollied him up until he was in a good humor. Then I took him into the sample room, and little by little, he laid out a line of goods. Just about the time he had finished it, it grew a little cloudy.

"Now, you know how the sun shines in Colorado? From one side of the state to the other it seldom gets behind a cloud. In short, it shines there 360 days in the year. It had been bright and clear all morning and all the time, in fact, until the old man had laid out his line of goods. Then he happened to look out of the window, and what do you suppose he said to me?

"'Vell, Maircus, I like you and I like your goots, but, ach Himmel! der clooty vetter!' And, do you know, I couldn't get the old man to do any business with me because he thought the sun was never going to shine again? I cannot understand just how he argued it with himself, but he was deaf to all of my coaxing. Finally I said to him:

"'Sam, you are kicking about the cloudy weather but I will make you a present of a box of cigars if the sun does not shine before we write down this order.'

"The old man was something of a gambler,—in fact the one pleasure of his life was to play penochle for two bits a corner after he closed up. So he said to me, 'Vell, Maircus, you can wride down der orter, and eef dot sun shines before we get t'rough, you can sheep der goots.'

"This was the first time that I ever played a game against the Powers That Be. I started in and the sky grew darker and darker. I monkeyed along for an hour and a half, and, just to kill time, tried to switch the old man

from patterns he had selected to others that I 'thought would be a little better.' But the Powers were against me, and when I finished writing down the order it was cloudier than ever—and nearly night, too.

"Then an idea struck me. 'Now, Sam,' said I, 'I've had a cinch on you all the time. You told me you were going to take this bill if the sun was shining when we got through writing down this order. Don't you know, Sam,' said I, laughing at him, 'the sun does shine and must shine every day. Sometimes a little cloud comes between it and the earth but that, you know, will soon pass away, and, cloud or no cloud, the sun shines just the same.'

"'Vell, Maircus,' said the old man, 'I cannod see any sunshine out der vindow, but dere's so much off id in your face dot you can sheep dot bill.' 'Well, Sam,' said I, 'if that's the case, I guess I will buy you that box of cigars.'"

Another thing: Don't beef!

There is a slight difference between the "grouch" and the "beef." The man may be grouchy without assuming to give a reason therefor, but when he "beefs" he usually thinks there is cause for it. I knew a man who once lost a good customer just because he beefed when a man to whom he had sold a bill of goods countermanded the order. The merchant was stretching his capital in his business to the limit. Things grew a little dull with him and he figured it out, after he had placed all of his orders, that he had bought too many goods. He used the hatchet a little all the way around. I had some of my own order cut off, but instead of kicking about it, I wrote him that he could even cut off more if he felt it was to his advantage; that I did not wish to load him up with more than he could use; that when the time came that I knew his business better than he did it would then be time for me to buy him out. But a friend of mine did not take this same turn. Instead, he wrote to the man—and the merchant thought a good deal of him, personally, too—that he had bought the goods in good faith, that expense had been made in selling the bill and that he ought to keep them.

"Well, now, that was the very worst thing he could have done because it went against the customer's grain. He let his countermand stand and since that time he has never bought any more goods from his old friend. He simply marked him off his list because it was very plain to him that the friendship of the past had been for what there was in it."

Don't fail to make a friend of your fellow salesman!

This can never do you any harm and you will find that it will often do you good. The heart of the man on the road should be as broad as the prairie and as free from narrowness as the Egyptian sky is free of clouds. One of my friends once told a group of us, as we traveled together, how an acquaintance he made helped him.

"I got into Dayton, Washington, one summer morning about 4:30," said he. "Another one of the boys—a big, strong, good−natured comrade— until then a stranger to me—and myself were the only ones left at the little depot when the jerk−water train pulled away. It was the first trip to this town for both of us. There was no 'bus at the depot and we did not know just how to get up to the hotel. The morning was fine —such a one as makes a fellow feel good clear down to the ground. The air was sweet with the smell of the dewy grass. The clouds in the east—kind of smeared across the sky—began to redden; they were the color of coral as we picked our way along the narrow plank walk. As we left behind us the bridge, which crossed a beautiful little stream lined with cotton woods and willows, they had turned a bright vermillion. There was not a mortal to be seen besides ourselves. The only sound that interrupted our conversation was the crowing of the roosters. The leaves were still. It was just the right time for the beginning of a friendship between two strangers.

"'Isn't this glorious!' exclaimed my friend.

"'Enchanting!' I answered. I believe I would have made friends with a crippled grizzly bear that morning. But this fellow was a whole−souled prince. We forgot all about business, and the heavy grips that we lugged up to the hotel seemed light. All I remember further was that my friend—for he had now become that to me—and myself went out to hunt up a cup of coffee after we had set down our grips in the hotel office.

"The next time I met that man was at the Pennsylvania Station at Philadelphia, ten years afterward, at midnight. We knew each other on sight.

"'God bless you, old man,' said he. 'Do you know me?'

"'You bet your life I do,' said I. 'We walked together one morning, ten years ago, from the depot at Dayton, Washington, to the hotel.' 'Do you remember that sunrise?' 'Well, do I?' 'What are you doing down here?' 'Oh, just down on business. The truth is, I am going down to New York. My house failed recently and I'm on the look−out for a job.'

“And do you know, boys, that very fellow fixed me up before ten o'clock next morning, with the people that I am with today, and you know whether or not I am getting on.”

Don't fall to be friendly with any one who comes in your way.

Another of the boys in the little group that had just listened to this story, after hearing it, said: 'You bet your life it never hurts a fellow to be friendly with anybody. Once, when I was going down from a little Texas town to Galveston, the coach was rather crowded. The only vacant seats in the whole car were where two Assyrian peddler women sat in a double seat with their packs of wares opposite them. But as I came in they very kindly put some of their bundles into the space underneath where the backs of two seats were turned together, thus making room for me. I sat down with them. A gentleman behind me remarked, 'Those people aren't so bad after all.' 'Yes,' I said, 'you will find good in every one if you only know how to get it out.'

“I had a long and interesting talk with that gentleman. He gave me his card and when I saw his name I recognized that he was a noted lecturer.”

“Well, what good did that do you?” said one of the boys who was not far−seeing.

“Good? Why that man asked me to come to his home. There I met one of his sons who was an advertising man for a very large firm in Galveston. He, in turn, introduced me to the buyer in his store and put in a good word with him for me. I had never been able to really get the buyer's attention before this time but this led me into a good account. You know, I don't care anything for introductions where I can get at a man without them. I'd rather approach a man myself straight out than to have any one introduce me to him, but there are cases where you really cannot get at a man without some outside influence. This was a case where it did me good.”

But, with all this, don't depend upon your old friends!

A salesman's friends feel that when he approaches them he does so because they are his friends, and not because he has goods to sell that have value. They will not take the same interest in his merchandise that they will in that of a stranger. They will give him, it is true, complimentary orders, charity−bird bills, but these are not the kind that count. Every old man on the road will tell you that he has lost many customers by making personal friends of them. No man, no matter how warm a friend his customer may be, should fail, when he does business with him, to give him to understand that the goods he is getting are worth the money that he pays for them. This will make a business friendship built upon confidence, and the business friend may afterward become the personal friend. A personal friendship will often follow a business friendship but business friendship will not always follow personal regard. Every man on the road has on his order book the names of a few who are exceptions to this rule. He values these friends, because the general rule of the road is: “Make a personal friend—lose a customer!” Don't switch lines!

The man who has a good house should never leave it unless he goes with one that he knows to be much better and with one that will assure him of a good salary for a long time.

Even then, a man often makes a mistake to his sorrow. He will find that many whom he has thought his personal friends are merely his business friends; that they have bought goods from him because they have liked the goods he sold. It is better for a man to try to improve the line he carries—even though it may not suit him perfectly—than to try his luck with another one. Merchants are conservative. They never put in a line of goods unless it strikes them as being better than the one that they are carrying, and when they have once established a line of goods that suits them, and when they have built a credit with a certain wholesale house, they do not like to fly around because the minute that they switch from one brand of goods that they are carrying to another, the old goods have become to them mere job lots, while if they continued to fill in upon a certain brand, the old stock would remain just as valuable as the new.

One of my old friends had a strong personality but was a noted changer. He is one of the best salesmen on the road but he has always changed himself out. He was a shoe man. I met him one day as he was leaving Lincoln, Nebraska. “Well, Andy,” said I, “I guess you got a good bill from your old friend here.”

“Ah, friend?” said he. “I thought that fellow was my friend, but he quit me cold this time. Didn't give me a sou. And do you know that this time I have a line just as good as any I ever carried in my life. I got him to go over to look, but what did he say? That he'd bought. And the worst of it is that he bought from the house I have just left and from the man that I hate from the ground up. Now, he's not any friend of mine any more. The man's your friend who buys goods from you.” I didn't have very much to say, for this man had been loyal to me, but when I went to Lincoln again I chanced to be talking to the merchant, and he said to me:

"Do you know, I like Andy mighty well. I tried to be a friend to him. When I first started with him I bought from him the "Solid Comfort." He talked to me and said that Solid Comforts were the thing, that they had a big reputation and that I would profit by the advertising that they had. Well, I took him at his word. I used to know him when I was a clerk, you know, and bought from him on his say−so, the Solid Comfort. I handled these a couple of years and got a good trade built up on them, and then he came around and said, 'Well, I've had to drop the old line. I think I'm going to do lots better with the house I'm with now. The "Easy Fitter" is their brand. Now, you see there isn't very much difference between the Easy Fitters and the Solid Comforts, and you won't have any trouble in changing your people over.'

"Well, I changed, and do you know I was in trouble just as soon as I began to run out of sizes of Solid Comforts. People had worn them and they had given satisfaction and they wanted more of them. Still, I didn't buy any at all and talked my lungs out selling the Easy Fitters.

"Well, it wasn't but a couple of years later when Andy came around with another line. This time he had about the same old story to tell. I said to him, 'Now, look here, Andy, I've had a good deal of trouble selling this second line you sold me instead of the first. People still come in and ask for them. I have got them, however, changed over fairly well to the Easy Fitters, and I don't want to go through with this old trouble again.'

"'Aw, come on,' said he, 'a shoe's a shoe. What's the difference?' And, out of pure friendship, I went with him again and bought the "Correct Shape." I had the same old trouble over again, only it was worse. The shoes were all right but I had lots of difficulty making people think so. So when Andy made this trip and had another line, I had to come right out and say, 'Andy, I can't do business with you. I have followed you three times from the Solid Comfort to the Easy Fitter, and from the Easy Fitter to the Correct Shape, but now I have already bought those and I can't give you a thing. I am going to be frank with you and say that I would rather buy goods from you, Andy, than from any other man I know of, but still Number One must come first. If you were with your old people, I would be only too glad to buy from you, but you've mixed me up so on my shoe stock that it wouldn't be worth fifty cents on the dollar if I were to change lines again. I will give you money out of my pocket, Andy,' said I, 'but I'm not going to put another new line on my shelves."

Don't fall on prices!

The man who does this will not gain the confidence of the man to whom he shows his goods. Without this he cannot sell a merchant successfully. A hat man once told me of an experience.

"When I first started on the road," said he, "I learned one thing—not to break on prices when a merchant asked me to come down. I was in Dubuque. It was about my fourth trip to the town. I had been selling one man there but his business hadn't been as much as it should, and I kept on the lookout for another customer. Besides, the town was big enough to stand two, anyway. I had been working hard on one of the largest clothing merchants, who carried my line, in the town. Finally I got him over to my sample room. I showed him my line but he said tome, 'Your styles are all right but your prices are too high. Vy, here is a hat you ask me twelf tollars for. Vy, I buy 'em from my olt house for eleven feefty. You cannot expect me to buy goods from you ven you ask me more than odders.'

"I had just received a letter from the house about cutting, and they had given it to me so hard that I thought I would ask the prices they wanted for their goods, and if I couldn't sell them that way, I wouldn't sell them at all. I hadn't learned to be honest then for its own sake; honesty is a matter of education, anyway. So I told my customer, 'No; the first price I made you was the bottom price. I'll not vary it for you. I'd be a nice fellow to ask you one price and then come down to another. If I did anything like that I couldn't walk into your store with a clear conscience and shake you by the hand. I've simply made you my lowest price in the beginning and I hope you can use the goods at these figures, but if you can't, I cannot take an order from you.' Well, he bought the goods at my prices, paying me $12 for what he said he could get for $11.50.

"A few days after that I met a fellow salesman who was selling clothing. He said to me, 'By Jove, my boy, you're going to get a good account over there in Dubuque, do you know that? The man you sold there told me he liked the way you did business. He said he tried his hardest to beat you down on prices but that you wouldn't stand for it, and that he had confidence in you.'

"And, sure enough, I sold that man lots of goods for many years, and I thus learned early in my career not to fall on prices. If a man is going to do any cutting, the time to do it is at the beginning of his trip when he marks his samples. He should do this in plain figures and he should in no way vary from his original price. If he does, he

should be man enough to send a rebate to those from whom he has obtained higher prices. If a man will follow out this method he will surely succeed."

Don't give away things!

This same hat man told me another experience he met with on that same trip. Said he, "I went in to see a man in eastern Nebraska. He was the one man on that trip who told me when I first mentioned business that he wanted some hats and that he would buy mine if they suited him. This looked to me like a push−over. Purely out of ignorance and good−heartedness, when he came to my sample room (I was a new man on the road), because he had been the first man who said he wanted some goods, I offered him a fine hat and do you know, he not only would not take the hat from me but he did not buy a bill. I learned from another one of the boys that he turned me down because I offered to make him a present. This is a rule which is not strictly adhered to, but if I were running a wholesale house I should let nothing be given to a customer. He will think a great deal more of the salesman if that salesman makes him pay for what he gets."

A salesman may be liberal and free in other ways, but when he gets to doing business he should not let it appear that he is trying to buy it. Of course it is all right and the proper thing to be a good fellow when the opportunity comes about in a natural kind of way. If you are in your customer's store, say, at late closing time on Saturday night, it is but natural for you to say to him: "Morris, I had a poor supper. I wonder if we can't go around here somewhere and dig up something to eat." You can also say to the clerks, "Come along, boys, you are all in on this. My house is rich. You've worked hard to−day and need a little recreation." But such courtesies as these, unless they fit in gracefully and naturally, would better never be offered.

Don't think any one too big or too hard for you to tackle.

If the salesman cannot depend upon his friends, then he must find his customers among strangers. I remember a man selling children's shoes, out in Oregon, who had not been able to get a looker even in the town. He was talking to a little bunch of us, enumerating those on whom he had called. The last one he spoke of was the big shoeman of the town. He said, "But I can't do anything with that fellow; why, his brother, who is his partner, sells shoes on the road."

"I'm all through with my business," spoke up a drygoods man, "but I'll bet the cigars that I can make Hoover (the shoeman) come and look at your stuff. That is, I'll make out to him that I'm selling shoes and I bet you that I'll bring him to my sample room."

"Well, I'll just take that bet," said the shoeman.

About this time I left for the depot. The next time I saw the drygoods man I asked him how he came out on that bet.

"Oh, I'd forgotten all about that," said he. "Well, I'll tell you. Just after you left I went right down to the shoeman's store. I found him back in his office writing some letters. I walked right up to him —you know I didn't have anything to lose except the cigars and their having the laugh on me—and I said, 'You are Mr. Hoover, I am sure. Now, sir, you are busy and what little I have to say I shall make very short to you, sir. My house gives its entire energy to the manufacture of foot covers for little folks. My line is complete and my prices are right. If you have money and are able to buy for cash on delivery, I should be glad to show you my line.'

"'I have bought everything for this season,' said Hoover.

"'Perhaps you think you have, Mr. Hoover, but do you wish to hold a blind bridle over your eyes and not see what's going on in your business? Do I not talk as if my firm were first class? I have come straight to you without any beating around the bush. I don't intend to offer any suggestions as to how you should run your business, but ask yourself if you can afford to pass up looking at a representative line. You've heard of my firm, have you not? And I made up some firm name for him.

"'No, I have not. I'm not interested in any new houses.'

"'Not interested in any new houses!' said I. 'The very fact that you don't even know the name of my firm is all the greater reason why you should come and see what sort of stuff they turn out.'

"'Yes, but I've bought; what's the use?' said he.

"'At least to post yourself,' I replied.

"'Well, I might as well come out and tell you,' said the shoeman, 'that my brother owns an interest in this business and that we handle his line exclusively.'

"'Then you mean to tell me that for your store here you are picking from one line of goods and are trying to

compete with other merchants in this town who have the chance of buying from scores of lines. Now, your brother is certainly a very poor salesman if he can't sell enough shoes to make a living on aside from those that he sells to his own store. Should he not let his wholesale business and his retail business be separate from one another? You yourself are interested in this concern and ought you not to have something to say? To be sure, when it comes to an even break you should by all means give your brother and his firm the preference; but do you believe that either you or he should have goods come into this house from his firm when you are able to get them better from some other place?'

"'No, I don't believe that is exactly business and we don't aim to.'

"'Well, if such is the case,' said I, 'come up and see what I have.'

"'Well, I'll just go you one,' said the shoeman.

"Do you know, I had him walk with me up to the hotel—he was a good jolly fellow—and when I marched into the office with him, I called the children's shoe man over and introduced him.

"He said, 'Well, this is one on me,' and then explained the bet to Hoover and bought the cigars for three instead of two."

Don't put prices on another man's goods!

I once had a merchant pass me out an article he had bought from another man. "How much is that worth?" he asked. "That I shall not tell you," I answered. "Suppose it is worth $24 a dozen. If I say it is worth $30, then you will say to me: 'There's no use doing business with you, this other man's goods are cheaper, you've confessed it.' If I say that it is worth $24 a dozen, then you will say to me that I'm not offering you any advantage. If I say it is worth $18 a dozen, you will believe that I am telling you a lie. Therefore, I shall say nothing."

Don't run down your competitor.

In talking of this point a furnishing goods man once said to me: "When I first went to travel in Missouri and Illinois I was green. I had a whole lot to learn, but still I had been posted by one of my friends who told me that I should always treat my competitor with especial courtesy. When I was on my first trip I met one of my competitors one day at a hotel in Springfield. I was introduced to him by one of the boys. I chatted with him as pleasantly as I could for a few minutes and then went up street to look for a customer.

"After dinner I was standing by the cigar case talking to the hotel clerk. Up came my competitor very pompously and bought a half dollar's worth of cigars. As he lighted one and stuck all the others into his pocket case he said to me in a 'What−are−you?' fashion, 'Oh, how are you?' and away he walked. Heavens, how he froze me! But from that day to this, while I have outwardly always treated him civilly, his customers have been the ones that I have gone after the hardest—and you bet your life that I've put many of his fish on my string."

Don't run down the other fellow's goods!

When a salesman tells merchants that he can sell them goods that are better, for the same price or cheaper than he is buying them, he at once offers an insult to the merchant's judgment. One of my merchant friends once told me of a breezy young chap who came into his store and asked him how much he paid for a certain suit of clothes that was on the table. "This young fellow was pretty smart," said my merchant friend. "He asked me how much I paid for a cheviot. I told him $9. He said, 'Nine dollars! Well, I can sell you one just like that for $7.' 'All right, I'll take fifty suits,' said I.

"About that time I turned away to wait on a customer and in an hour or so the young fellow came in again and said, 'Well, my line is all opened up now, and if you like we can run over to my sample room.' 'Why, there's no use of doing that,' said I. 'You tell me that you can sell me goods just exactly like what I have for $2 a suit cheaper. No use of my going over to look at them. Just send them along. Here, I can buy lots of goods from you.'

"'Oh, they're not exactly like these, but pretty near it,' said he.

"'Well, if they're not exactly like these I don't care for them at all because these suit me exactly.'

"With this the young fellow took a tumble to himself and let me alone."

Don't carry side lines!

You might just as well mix powder with sawdust. If you scatter yourself from one force to another you weaken the force which you should put into your one line. If this does not pay you, quit it altogether.

Don't take a conditional order!

If your customer cannot make up his mind while you can bring your arguments to bear upon him in his presence, you may depend upon it he will never talk himself into ordering your goods. If you can lead a merchant

to the point of saying, "Well, I'll take a memorandum of your stock numbers and maybe I'll send in for some of these things later," and not get him to budge any further, and if you lend him your pencil to write down that conditional order, you will be simply wasting a little black lead and a whole lot of good time.

There are many more "Don'ts" for the salesman but I shall leave you to figure out the rest of them for yourself—but just one more:

DON'T be ashamed that you are a salesman!

Salesmanship is just as much a profession as law, medicine, or anything else, and salesmanship also has its reward.

Salesmanship requires special study, and the fact that the schools of salesmanship which are now starting are patronized not only by those who wish to become salesmen but also by those who wish to be more successful in their work, shows that there is an interest awakening in this profession.

There is a science of salesmanship, whether the salesman knows it or not. If he will only get the idea that he can study his profession and profit thereby, this idea in his head will turn out to be worth a great deal to him.

CHAPTER XVI. MERCHANTS THE SALESMAN MEETS.

A bunch of us sat in the Silver Grill of the Hotel Spokane where we could see the gold fish and the baby turtles swimming in the pool of the ferned grotto in the center of the room. This is one place toward which the heart of every traveling man who wanders in the far Northwest turns when he has a few days of rest between trips. Perhaps more good tales of the road are told in this room than in any other in the West. There is an air about the place that puts one at ease—the brick floor, the hewn logs that support the ceiling and frame in the pictures of English country life around the walls, the big, comfortable, black−oak chairs, and the open fireplace, before which spins a roasting goose or turkey.

"Yes, you bet we strike some queer merchants on the road, boys," said the children's clothing man. "I ran into one man out west of here and it did me a whole lot of good to get even with him. He was one of those suspicious fellows that trusted to his own judgment about buying goods rather than place faith in getting square treatment from the traveling man. You all know how much pleasure it gives us to trump the sure trick of one of this kind. I don't believe that merchants, anyway, know quite how independent the traveling man feels who represents a first class house and has a well established trade. Not many of the boys, though, wear the stiff neck even though their lines are strong and they have a good cinch on their business. There isn't much chance, as a general thing, for any of us to grow a big bump of conceit. A man who is stuck on himself doesn't last long, it matters not how good the stuff is that he sells. Yet, once in a while he lifts up his bristles.

"Well, sir, a few seasons ago I sold a man—you all know who I mean— about half of his spring bill, amounting to $600. He gave the other half to one of the rottenest lines that comes out of this country. When I learned where my good friend had bought the other half of his bill, I felt sure that the following season I would land him for his whole order; but when I struck him that next season, he said, 'No, I've bought. You can't expect to do business with me on the sort of stuff that you are selling,' and he said it in such a mean way that it made me mad as blazes. Yet I threw a blanket around myself and cooled off. It always harms a man, anyway, to fly off the handle. I wasn't sure of another bill in the town as it was getting a little late in the season.

"After he had told me what he did, he started to wait on a customer and I went to the hotel to open up. Just as I was coming through the office I met another merchant in the town who handled as many goods as my old customer, and I boned him right there to give me a look. 'All right,' said he, 'I will, after luncheon.' Come down about half past one when all the boys are back to the store and I'll run over with you.' You know it sometimes comes easy like this.

"I sold him his entire line, and he was pleased with what he bought because the old line he had been handling, he told me frankly, had not been giving satisfaction.

"Just for curiosity's sake I dropped in on my old man. I wanted to find out exactly what he was kicking about, anyway.

"'Now, what's the matter with this stuff I've sold you?' said I to him.

"'Well, come and see for yourself,' said he. 'Here, look at this stuff,' and he threw out three or four numbers of boys' goods. 'That's the punkest plunder,' said he, 'that I ever had in my house.'

"I at once saw that the goods he showed me were the other fellow's, but I kept quiet for a while. 'Look at your bill,' said I. 'There must be some mistake about this.' He turned to the bill from my house and he couldn't find the stock numbers. 'Well, that's funny,' said he. 'Not at all,' I replied. 'Look at the other man's bill and see if you don't find them.' "Well, sir, when he saw that the goods he was kicking about had come from my competitor's house, he swore like a trooper and said to me, 'Well, I will simply countermand this order I have given and I'll go right up with you and buy yours.'

"'No, I guess not,' said I. 'When I came in this morning you condemned me without giving me a full hearing and you weren't very nice about it, either, so I've just placed my line with your neighbor. I will show you the order I have just taken from him,' said I, handing over my order book."

"Well, that must have made you feel good," spoke up the shoeman. "I had pretty much the same sort of an experience this very season down south here. I had been calling on a fair−sized merchant in the town for a couple of years. The first time I went to his town I sold him a handful. The next time I sold him another handful. The third

time I called on him he didn't give me any more business. I had just about marked him down for a piker. You know how we all love those pikers, anyway. These fellows who buy a little from you and a little from the other fellow—in fact, a little from every good line that comes around—just to keep the other merchants in the town from getting the line and not giving enough to any one man to justify him in taking care of the account or caring anything about it. He was one of those fellows who would cut off his nose and his ears and burn his eyes out just to spite his face.

"This trip, as usual, I sold him his little jag. I didn't say anything to him, but thought it was high time I was going out and looking up another customer. I finally found another man who gave me a decent bill—between seven and eight hundred dollars—and he promised me that he would handle my line right along if the stuff turned out all O.K. He said he wasn't the biggest man in the town at that time but that his business was growing steadily and that he had just sold a farm and was going to put more money into the business and enlarge the store. He struck me as being the man in the town for me.

"My piker friend had seen me walking over to the sample room with this other man. When I dropped around, after packing up, to say good−bye, he said to me, 'I saw you going over to your sample room with this man down street here. I suppose, of course, you didn't sell him anything?'

"'To be sure I did,' said I. 'Why, why shouldn't I? You haven't been giving me enough to pay my expenses in coming to the town, much less to leave any profit for me.' "'Well, if you can't sell me exclusively, you can't sell me at all,' said he, rearing back.

"'All right,' said I. 'I won't sell you at all if that's the case. Here's your order. Do with it what you please. In fact, I won't even grant you that privilege. I myself shall call it off. Here goes.' And with this I tore up his order."

"Served him right," said the men's clothing man. "Did you ever know Grain out on the Great Northern?"

"Sure," said the shoe man. "Who doesn't know that pompous know−it− all?"

"Well, sir, do you know that fellow isn't satisfied with any one he deals with, and he thinks that this whole country belongs to him. He wrote me several seasons ago to come out to see him. He had heard one of the boys speak well of my line of goods. I went to his town and first thing I did was to open up. Then I went into his store and told him I was all ready.

"'Well, I've decided,' said he, 'that I won't buy anything in your line this season.'

"'You will at least come over and give me a look, in that I have come over at your special request, will you not?"

"'NO, no! No is no with me, sir.'

"I couldn't get him over there. He went into his office and closed the door behind him. I had hard lines in the town that season. I went up to see another man and told him the circumstances but he said, 'No, I don't play any second fiddle,' and do you know, I didn't blame him a bit.

"I had made up my mind to mark this town off my list, but you know, business often comes to us from places where we least expect it. This is one of the things which make road life interesting. How often it happens that you fully believe before you start out that you are going to do business in certain places and how often your best laid plans 'gang aglee!'

"Another man in this town wrote in to the house (this was last season) for me to come to see him. In his letter he said that he was then clerking for Grain and he was going to quit there and start up on his own hook. Somehow or other the old man got on to the fact that his clerk was going to start up and that he had written in for my line. He was just that mean that he wanted to put as many stones in the path of his old clerk as he possibly could, and I don't know whether it was by accident or design that Grain came in here to Spokane the same day that his old clerk did, or not. At any rate, they were here together.

"Just about the time I had finished selling my bill to Grain's clerk, the old man 'phoned up to my room that he would like to see me. This time he was sweet as sugar. I asked him over the 'phone what he wished. He said, 'I'd like to buy some goods from you. 'Don't care to sell you,' I answered over the wire. His old clerk was right there in the room then and he was good, too. He had got together two or three well−to−do farmers in the neighborhood and had organized a big stock company with the capital stock fully paid up. The whole country had become tired of Grain and his methods, and a new man stood a mighty good chance for success—and you know, boys, what a bully good business he has built up.

"'Why, what's the mater?' 'phoned back the old man.

"'Just simply this: that I have sold another man in your town, and I don't care to place my line with more than one,' I answered. 'Who Is it?' said he. I told him.

"'Well, now, look here,' he came back at me. 'That fellow's just a tidbit. He thinks he's going to cut some ice out there, but he won't last long, and, do you know, if you'll just simply chop his bill off, I'll promise to buy right now twice as much as he has bought from you.'

"If there's a man on the road who is contemptible in the eyes of his fellow traveling men, it is the one who will solicit a countermand; and the merchant who will do this sort of a trick is even worse, you know, boys, in our eyes.

"'What do you take me for?' I 'phoned back.

"I'm very glad to have a chance, sir, to give you a dose of your own medicine. You can't run any such a sandy as this on me,' and I hung up the 'phone on him without giving him the satisfaction of talking it out any further. To be sure, I would not go down stairs to look him up.

"Well, that must have pleased the old man's clerk," said one of the boys.

"Sure it did. He touched the button and made me have a two−bit straight cigar on him."

"You got even with him all right," said one of my hat friends who was in the party; but let me tell you how a merchant down in Arkansas once fixed me and my house."

"Old Benzine?" said the shoeman.

"Sure; that's the fellow. How did you hear about it?"

"Well, my house got it the same way yours did."

"Ah, that fellow was a smooth one," continued the hat man. "He had burned out so often that he had been nicknamed Benzine, but still he had plenty of money and though my house knew he was tricky, they let him work them. I didn't know anything about the old man's reputation when I called on him. He had recently come down into Arkansas—this was when I traveled down there—and opened up a new store in one of my old towns. I didn't have a good customer in the town and in shopping about fell in on Benzine.

"He kicked hard about looking at my goods when I asked him to do so. He knew how to play his game all right. He knew that I would bring all sorts of persuasions to bear upon him to get him started over to my sample room, and just about the time he thought I was going to quit he said, 'Vell, I look but I vont gif you an orter.' Of course that was all I wished for. When a man on the road can get a merchant to say he will look at his goods, he knows that the merchant wishes to buy from somebody in his line and he feels that he has ninety−nine chances in a hundred of selling him.

"That afternoon Old Benzine came over and he was mean. He tore up the stuff and said it was too high priced, and everything of that kind. He haggled over terms and started to walk out several times. He made his bluff good with me and I thought he was 'giltedge.' Finally, though, I sold him about a thousand dollars. The old man had worked me all right. Now he began to put the hooks into the house.

"The same day that my order reached the house came a letter from Benzine stating that he had looked over his copy and he wished they would cut off half of several items on the bill. Ah, he was shrewd, that old guy. He was working for credit. He knew that if he wrote to have part of his order cut off, the credit man would think he was good. My house couldn't ship the bill to him quickly enough, and they wrote asking him to let the whole bill stand. He was shrewd enough to tell them no, that he didn't wish to get any more goods than he could pay for. That sent his stock with the house a sailing. But the old chap wasn't done with them yet.

"About six weeks before the time for discounting he wrote in and said that as his trade had been very good indeed they could ship additional dozens on all the items that he had cut down to half−dozens, and in this way he ran his bill to over $1,300."

"Well, you got a good one out of him that season, all right."

"Yes—where the chicken got the ax. As soon as Old Benzine had run in all the goods he could, he did the shipping act. He left a lot of empty boxes on his shelves but shipped nearly all of his stock to some of his relatives, and then in came the coal−oil can once more."

"Didn't you get any money out of him at all?" one of the boys asked.

"Money?" said the shoeman. "Did you ever hear of anybody getting money out of Old Benzine unless they got it before the goods were shipped? If ever there was a steal−omaniac, he was it, sure!"

With this, one of the boys tossed a few crumbs to the gold fish. The turtles, thinking he had made a threatening

motion toward them, quietly ducked to the bottom of the pool. The white−capped cook took the turkey from before the fire. The water kept on trickling over the ferns but its sound I soon forgot, as another hat man took up the conversation.

"Most merchants," said he, "are easy to get along with. They have so many troubles thrown upon them that, as a rule, they make as few for us as they can. Once in awhile we strike a merchant who gets smart—"

"But he doesn't win anything by that," observed the clothing man.

"No; you bet not! I used to sell a man down in the valley who tried a trick on me. I had sold him for two seasons and his account was satisfactory. Another man I knew started up in the town and he was willing to buy my goods from me without the brands in them. I remained loyal to my first customer in not selling the new man my branded goods. In fact, about the only difference between a great many lines of goods is the name, as you know, and a different name in a hat makes it a different hat. In all lines of business, just as soon as one firm gets out a popular style, every other one in the country hops right on to it, so it is all nonsense for a salesman not to sell more than one man in a town when the names in the goods are different, and the merchant, when such is the case, has no kick coming on the man who sells one of his competitors.

"Well, everything was all right until Fergus, customer No. 2, sent in a mail order to the house. They, by mistake (and an inexcusable one— but what can you expect of underpaid stock boys?) shipped out to him some goods branded the same as those my first customer, Stack, had in his house. Fergus wrote in to me and told me about the mistake. He didn't wish to carry the branded goods any more than the other man wished for him to do so, and asked that some labels be sent him to paste over his boxes.

"I was in the house at the time and sent out several labels to Fergus. At the same time I wrote to Stack, very frankly telling him of the mistake and saying that I regretted it and all I could say about it was that it was a mistake and that it would not occur again. Instead of taking this in good faith, he immediately came out with a flaming ad:

EVERY MAN
IN THE COUNTY
Should appreciate the following:
Leopard Hats, $2.00.
Sold everywhere for $3.00 and $3.50.

"His goods had really cost him $24 a dozen and he was merely aiming to cut under the other man's throat, but he didn't know how he was sewing himself up. I wrote him:

"'My good friend: I have always believed that you felt kindly toward me, and now I am doubly certain of it. All that I have a right to expect of my best friends is that they will advertise my goods only so long as they keep on carrying them—but you have done me even a greater favor. You are advertising them for the benefit of another customer, although you have quit buying from me. Let me thank you for this especial favor which you do me and should I ever be able to serve you in any way, personally, command me.'

"Well, how did he take that?" I asked.

"Oh, he didn't really see that he was advertising his competitor, and he came back at me with this letter:

"'Your valued favor of the 3Oth to hand. I assure you that you owe me no debt of gratitude as I am always glad to be of service to my friends, and under no circumstances do I wish them to feel under obligations to me. I would be only too glad to sell the Leopards at one dollar each, provided they could be bought at a price lower than that from you. But at present any one can purchase them from me at $2 each, which 'should be appreciated by every man in the county.' With kindest regards, very truly yours.'

"Well, how did you fix him?" said the shoe man.

"Fix him? How did you know I did?"

"Oh, that was too good a chance to overlook."

"You bet it was. When I went into the house a few days afterwards, I picked out some nice clean jobs in Leopards and I socked the knife into the price so that Fergus could sell them at $1.50 apiece and make a good profit. I then sicked him on to Stack and there was merry war. In the beginning, as I fancied he would, Stack got a man in another town to send in to my house and pay regular price for my goods and he continued to sell them at $2 each. After he had loaded up on them pretty well, my other man began to put them down to $1.75, $1.60, $1.50, and forced my good friend to sell all he had on hand at a loss. That deal cost him a little bunch."

"There's altogether too much of this throat−cutting business between merchants. The storekeeper who can hold his own temper can generally hold his own trade.

"Well, sir, do you know a fellow strikes a queer combination on the road once in awhile. I think about the oddest deal I ever got into in my life was in Kearney, Nebraska," said an old−timer.

"When I was a young fellow I went on the road. I had a clerical appearance but it was enforced more or less by necessity. I hustled pretty hard catching night trains and did any sort of a thing in order to save time. I wore a black string necktie because it saved me a whole lot of trouble. Once I sat down and calculated how much my working time would be lengthened by wearing string ties and gaiter shoes, and I'll tell you it amounts to a whole lot, to say nothing of the strain on one's temper and conscience saved by not having to lace up shoes in a berth.

"Well, I struck Kearney late one Saturday night—looking more or less like a young preacher. Going direct to my friend, Ward, he greeted me in a cordial, drawling sort of fashion and with very little trouble (although that was my first time in the town) I made an engagement to show him some straw hats.

"It is rather the custom when one gets west of Omaha to do business on Sunday, and so habituated had I become to this practice that I was rather surprised when my friend, Ward, said to me: 'Now, I'll see you on Monday morning. Yes, on Monday morning. To−morrow, you know, is the Sabbath, and you will find here at the hotel a nice, comfortable place to stay. The cooking is excellent and the rooms are nice and tidy, and I am sure that you will enjoy it. If I can do anything further to add to your pleasure I shall be only too glad to have the opportunity. Perhaps you will come up to our Sunday School to−morrow morning. I am Superintendent and I shall see that good care is taken of you. May we not expect you up?'

"Of course I wanted to get a stand in—I confess it—and, furthermore, I had not forgotten my early training, and you know that boys on the road are not such a bad tribe as we are ofttimes made out to be. So I promised Brother Ward that I would go up the next morning.

"That part of it was all very good but how do you suppose I felt when, after the lessons had been read, I was called upon to address the Sabbath school? I was up against it, but being in I had to make good; and it often happens that, when a fellow is in the midst of people who assume that he is wise, wisdom comes to him.

"The night before I had come in on a freight. I was mighty tired, fell asleep, and was carried past the station about a mile and a half. All at once I woke up in the caboose—I had been stretched out on the cushions—and asked the conductor how far it was to Kearney. 'Kearney?' said the conductor. 'Kearney? We are a mile and a half past.' At the same time he sent out a brakeman who signaled down the train. I was fully two miles from the depot when I got off, lugging a heavy grip. I didn't know it was so far. I had just one thing to do, that was to hoof it down the track. Scared? Bet your life! I thought every telegraph pole was a hobo laying for me, clean down to the station. Luckily there was an electric light tower in the center of the town and this was a sort of guide−post for me and it helped to keep up my courage.

"In the little talk that I had to make to the Sunday School, having this experience of the night before so strong in my mind, I told them of the wandering life I had to live, of how on every hand, as thick as telegraph poles along the railway, stood dangers and temptations; but that I now looked back and that my light tower had always been the little Sunday School of my boyhood days. "When you get right down to it, we all have a little streak of sentiment in us, say what you will, when in boyhood we have had the old−time religion instilled into us. It sticks in spite of everything. It doesn't at any time altogether evaporate.

"Well, sir, I thought that I was all solid with Brother Ward. So the next morning I figured out that, as I could not go west, where I wished to, I could run up on a branch road and sandwich in another town without losing any time. I went to him early Monday morning and asked if it would be just as convenient for him to see me at three o'clock that afternoon.

"'Oh, yes, indeed; that will suit me all the better,' said Brother Ward. 'That will give me an opportunity to look over my stock of goods and see just what I ought to order.'

"I made the town on the branch road and was back at 2:30. When I went into my sample room, a friend of mine, a competitor, had just packed up. 'Hello,' said I, 'how are things going, Billy?'

"'Oh, fairly good,' said he. 'I have just got a nice bill of straw goods out of Ward, here. Whom do you sell?'

"'Well, that's one on me!' I exclaimed. Then I told my friend of my engagement with Ward, and bought the cigars.

"But anyhow I opened up and went over to see Brother Ward. I got right down to business and said: 'Brother

Ward, my samples are open and I am at your service.' 'Well, Brother,' said he, 'I have been looking over my stock' (he had about a dozen and a half of fly−specked straw hats on his show case, left over from the year before and not worth 40 cents), 'and I have about come to the conclusion that I'll work off the old goods I have in preference to putting in any new ones. You see if I buy the new ones they will move first and the old goods will keep getting older.'—An old gag, you know!

"I saw that he was squirming, but I thought I would pin him down hard and fast, so I asked him the pat question: 'Then you have not bought any straw hats for this season's business, Brother Ward?' 'Nope, nope,' said he—telling what I knew to be a point−blank lie.

"'Well, Brother Ward,' said I, 'we are both confronted by a Christian duty. A fellow competitor and traveling man told me just a little while ago that he had sold you an out−and−out order of straw hats. Now I know that he is not telling the truth because you, a most reputable citizen of this town and a most worthy Superintendent of the Sunday School, have told me out−and−out that you have not bought any goods. Now, to−night, when you go home, do you not think that it is your duty, as well as mine, to ask the Lord to have mercy on and to forgive the erring brother who has told such a falsehood? I am sure that had he been trained to walk in the straight and narrow path he would not have done so. Your prayers, I am sure, will avail much.'

"When Brother Ward saw that I had him he colored from the collar up, and when I left him and said 'Peace be with thee!' his face was as red as the setting sun."

"I have a customer," said the furnishing goods man, "who beats the world on complaints. Every time I go to see him he must always tell me his troubles before I can get around to doing business with him. If you put business at him point−blank, it isn't very long before he twists the talk. So now I usually let him tell his troubles before I say anything to him about business. The last time I went in to see him—he is Sam Moritsky, in the clothing business down in Los Angeles —I said, 'Hello, Sam, how are you?' He answered:

"'Der Talmud id say "Happy ees de man who ees contentet," but it says in anodder place, "Few are contentet." I'm a seek man. De trobble in dis world ees, a man vants bread to leeve on ven he hasn't got dot. And ven he gets der bread he es sotisfite only a leetle vile. He soon vants butter on id. Ven he gets der butter in a leetle vile he vants meat, and den he vants vine and a goot cigar, and ven he gets all dese t'ings, he gets seek. I am a seek man.

"'Vonce I vanted a house on Cap'tol 'ell (Capitol Hill)—seex t'ousand tollars it costet. Eef I got id feeften 'undret—could haf borrowed dot much—I would haf bought id, but I couldn't get dot feeften 'undret, and now I am glat. It vould have costet seexty fife tollars a mont to leeve and den I haf to geeve a party and a sopper and somet'ings and I make a beeg show,—a piano for my dotter, a fine dress for my vife, t'eater and all dot, and first t'ing I know, muhulla (I go broke)!

"'Vell, it's all ride eef I wasn't a seek man. Dey say dese ees a goot country. I say no. My fadder's family vants to come to dese country. I say no. In Russia a man he half a goot time. Vriday night he close de store at seex o'glock. He puts on his Sonday clothes, beeg feast all day Sonday, dance, vine, lots of goot t'ings. Veek days he geds down to beesness at eight o'clock—at ten o'glock he has coffee and den in a leetle vile he goes home and eats lonch. Den he takes a nap. De cheeldon, dey valk on der toes t'rough de room. "Papa's asleep," dey say. Seex o'glock he come home, beeg deener, he smokes hees pipe, goes to bet,—and de same t'ing over again.

"'I vork so hard in dese contry. I am a seek man. Here I vork sefen days in de veek from sefen in de morning to elefen at night, and sometimes twelf. Only vonce last year I go to t'eater in de afternoon. Ven I com home I catch 'ell from my vife. She say, "You safe money, Sam, and we get oud of dese bondage," and I say I must haf a leetle recreations. Sunday all day I keep open. Von Sunday night I say I go home and take my vife and my cheeldon and I go to t'eater. Ven I go to put de key into de door here comes a customer een, and I sell 'eem tventy−fife tollars—feeften tollars brofit. I vould haf lostet dot feeften tollars and vat I vould haf paid to go to t'eater eef I had closed op.

"'Besides, here at dis place all de family helps. Even my leetle goil, she goes oud to buy me a cigar von day, and she ask de man dot sells de cigar to buy somet'ing from papa. He vants some boys' shoes. I haf none. She goes across de streedt and buys a pair und sells dem for a tollar—feefty−five cents brofit. I gif my leetle goil a neeckle and I keep de feefty cents. Dots de vay it goes. I could not do dot eef I leefed on Cap'tol 'ell.

"'But den I am a seek man, but I am better off as de man who leefs on Cap'tol 'ell. He is so beesy. He eats his deener in de store. He has so many trobbles because he vants to make hees fortune beeger. Vat's de use? Here I

am contentet. I go op stairs and notting botters me vile I eat deener. Now, I say vat de Talmud say ees right. Happy ees de man who ees contentet. Eet vould be all righdt eef I vas not a seek man.'

"When he got through with this speech I chewed the rag with him about business for half an hour, as I always had to do, finally telling him, as a last inducement which I always threw out, that I had some lots 'to close.' This was the only thing that would make him forget that he was 'a seek man.' And when I get right down to it, I believe I get more actual enjoyment out of selling Sam than from any customer I have."

"Speaking of your man Sam," said one of the hat men, "reminds me of a customer I once had with the same name. But my Sam was a bluffer. He was one of the kind that was always making kicks that he might get a few dollars rebate. I stood this sort of work for a few seasons but I finally got tired of it and, besides, I learned that the more I gave in to him the more I had to yield. A few years ago when I was traveling in Wisconsin, I went into his store and before he let go of my hand he began: 'Ah, that last bill was a holy terror. Why doesn't your house send out good goods? Why, I'll have to sell all those goods at a loss, and I need them, bad, too. They aint no use of my tryin' to do no more business with you. I like to give you the business, you know, but I can't stand the treatment that the house is giving me. They used to send out part of their goods all right, but here lately it is getting so that every item is just rotten.'

"I let Sam finish his kick and, as I started out the door I merely said, 'All right, Sam, I'll see you after awhile and fix this up all right. I want to go down and work on my samples a little.'

"As I saw him pass on the other side of the street going home to dinner, I slid up to his store and took all his last shipment from his shelves and stacked them in the middle of the floor. About the time I had finished doing this he came back.

"'Why, what are you doing?' said he.

"'Well, I'll tell you, Sam. I don't want you to have anything in the house that doesn't suit you, and I would a great deal rather than you would fire all this stuff back to the house. Look up and see the amount of freight charges you paid on them. Meantime I'll run down to the hotel and get my book and make you out a check for whatever it comes to. Come on down to the corner with me anyway, Sam. Let's have a cigar and take the world easy. I'm not going out tonight.'

"Sam went down to the corner with me. In a few minutes I returned to the store with my check book in hand. As I went into his store Sam was putting my goods back on the shelves.

"'Got your samples open?' he said.

"'Sure, Sam,' said I. 'Did you suppose I was going to let you bluff me this way?' And that was the last time he ever tried to work the rebate racket on me."

"So long as a bluffer is warm about it," said the shoe man, "it's all right; but I do hate to go up against one of those cold bloods, even if he isn't a bluffer."

"That depends," said the clothing man. "There's one man I used to call on and every time I went to see him I felt like feeling of his pulse to see if it were beating. If I had taken hold of his wrist I would not have been surprised to find that the artery was filled with fine ice. Gee! but how he froze me. Somehow I could always get him to listen to me, but I could never get him to buy.

"One day, to my surprise, the minute I struck him he said, 'Samples open?' And when I told him 'Yes' he had his man in my department turn over a customer that he was waiting on, to another one of the boys, and took him right down to the sample room. I never sold an easier bill in my life, so you see a cold blood is all right if he freezes out the other fellow."

The goose that had twirled so long before the pine log blaze was now put before us. The Spanish Senor with his violin started the program, and our tales for the evening were at an end.

CHAPTER XVII. HIRING AND HANDLING SALESMEN.

To hire and handle salesmen is the most important work of the head of the house. When a man goes out on the road to represent a firm, his traveling expenses alone are from five to twenty−five dollars a day, and sometimes even fifty. His salary is usually as much as his expenses, if not more. If a salesman does not succeed, a great portion of his salary and expenses is a dead loss, and, further, the firm is making a still greater loss if he does not do the business. In fact, if a poor man, succeeding a good one, falls down, his house can very easily lose many thousands of dollars by not holding the old trade of the man whose place he took. If all the wholesale houses in Chicago, say, which have a good line of salesmen were, at the beginning of the year, to lose all of those salesmen and replace them with dummies, three−fourths of these firms would go broke in from six months to three years. This is how important the salesman is to his firm.

I put hiring and handling of salesmen before having a strong line of goods, because if the proper salesmen are hired and are handled right, they will soon compel the house to put out the right line of goods. Just as a retail merchant should consult with his clerks about what he should buy, so, likewise, should the head of the wholesale house find out from his men on the road what they think will sell best. The salesman rubs up against the consumer and knows at first hand what the customer actually wants.

When the head of a house has a man to hire, the first man he looks for is one who has an established trade in the territory to be covered—a trade in his line of business. A house I have in mind which, ten years ago, was one of the top notchers in this country, has gone almost to the foot of the class because the "old man" who hired and handled the salesmen in that house died and was succeeded by younger heads not nearly so wise.

The still hunt was the old man's method. When he needed a salesman for a territory he would go out somewhere in that territory himself and feel about for a man. He would usually make friends with the merchants and find out from them the names of the best men on the road and his chances for getting one of them. The merchants, you know, can always spot the bright salesmen. When they rub up against them a few times they know the sort of mettle they are made of. The merchant appreciates the bright salesman whether he does business with him or not and the salesman who is a man will always find welcome under the merchant's roof. Salesmen are the teachers of the merchant, and the merchant knows this. Whenever he is planning to change locations, build a new store, move to some other town, put in a new department, or make any business change whatsoever, it is with traveling men that he consults. They can tell him whether or not the new location will be a good one and they can tell him if the new department which he is figuring on starting is proving profitable over the country in general. And, on the other hand, when the traveling man is expecting to make a change of houses, he often asks the advice of the merchant.

One of the biggest clothing salesmen in the United States once told me how this very old man hired him. Said Simon, "When I started out on the road my hair was moss. I almost had to use a horse comb to currie it down so I could wear my hat. Heavens, but I was green! I had been a stock boy for a kyke house and they put me out in Colorado. Don't know whether I have made much progress or not. My forefathers carried stuff on their backs; I carry it in trunks. Although changing is often bad business, the best step I ever made was to leave the little house and go with a bigger one. I had been piking along and while I was giving my little firm entire satisfaction, I was not pleasing myself with what I was doing. I could go out in the brush with my line, riding on a wagon behind bronchos, where a first−class man wouldn't, and dig up a little business with the yocles, but I couldn't walk into a mocher (big merchant) and do business with him. Yet, when I first started out I was fool enough to try it and I made several friends among the bigger merchants of Denver. But this did me no harm.

"One day, when I went in to see one of these big men in Denver, he said to me, 'Look here, Simon, you're a mighty good fellow and I'd like to do business with you, but you know I can't handle any goods from the concern you represent. Why don't you make a change?' I said to him, 'Well, I'm really thinking about it, but I don't know just where I can get in.' He said, 'I think I can give you a good tip. Old man Strauss from Chicago is out here looking for a man for this territory. He was in to see me only yesterday and told me he was on the lookout for a bright fellow. He's stopping up at the Windsor and I'd advise you to go over and get next if you can.'

"'Thank you very much,' said I; and I went over to the Windsor—I was putting up there—and asked the head

clerk, who was a good friend of mine, where Strauss was.

"'Why, Simon,' said he, 'he's just gone down to the depot to take the D. R. G. for Colorado Springs, but you will have no trouble finding him if you want to see him. They're not running any sleepers on the train. It's just a local between here and Pueblo. He wears gold−rimmed spectacles, is bald, and smokes all the time.'

"I called a cab, rushed down to the depot, checked my trunks to Colorado Springs, and jumped on the train just as she was pulling out. I spotted the old man as I went into the coach. He was sitting in a double seat with his feet up on the cushions. I got a whiff of his 'Lottie Lee' ten feet away. Luckily for me, all the seats in the car except the one the old man had his feet on, were occupied, so I marched up and said, 'Excuse me, sir, I dislike tol make you uncomfortable,' and sat down in front of him.

"The old man saw that I was one of the boys and, as he wanted to pump me, he warmed up and offered me one of his Lotties. I shall never forget that cigar. Smoke 'em in Colorado,—smell 'em in Europe! I managed to drop it on the floor in a few minutes so that I could switch onto one of mine. I pulled out a pair of two−bit−straights and passed one over, lighting the other for myself.

"'Dot vas a goot seecar,' said the old man. 'You are on der roat?'

"'Yes,' said I.

"'Vat's your bees'ness?'

"'I'm selling clothing.'

"'Vat? Veil, I am in dot bees'ness myself.'

"'Who do you travel for?' said I, playing the innocent.

"'I'm not on de roat,' said the old man. 'I am just out on a leetle trip for my healt. I am a monufacturer. Who do you trafel for?'

"I told him and then tried to switch the conversation to something else. I knew the old man wouldn't let me do it.

"'V'ere do you trafel?' said he.

"'Oh, Colorado, Utah, and up into Montana and Wyoming,' I answered.

"The old man took his feet off the cushions and his arms from the back of his seat. I thought I had him right then.

"'Dot's a goot contry,' said he. 'How long haf you been in deese beezness?' 'Five years,' said I. 'Always mit de same house?' 'Yes,' said I, 'I don't believe in changing.' The old man had let his cigar go out and he lit a match and let it burn his finger. I was sure that he was after me then.

"I didn't tell him that I had been a stock boy for nearly four years and on the road a little over one. It is a good sign, you know, if a man has been with a house a long time.

"'How's beezness this season?' said he.

"'Oh, it's holding up to the usual mark,' I said like an old timer.

"'Who do you sell in Denver?' said he.

"That was a knocker. 'Denver is a hard town to do business in,' said I. 'In cities, you know, the big people are hard to handle and the little ones you must look out for.' That was another strong point; I wanted him to see that I didn't care to do business with shaky concerns.

"'Vell,' said he after a while, 'you shouldt haf a stronger line and den you could sell de beeg vons.'

"'Yes, but it is a bad thing for a man to change,' said I. I knew that I was already hired and I was striking him for as big a guaranty as I could get, and my game worked all right because he asked me to take supper with him that night in the Springs and before we left the table he hired me for the next year.

"I came very near not fulfilling my contract, though, because after I had promised the old man I would come to him he said, 'Shake and haf a seecar,' and I had to smoke another Lottie Lee."

It is on the still hunt that the best men are trapped. Experienced salesmen—good ones—always have positions and are not often looking for jobs. To get them the wholesaler must go after them and the one who does this gets the best men. Hundreds of applications come in yearly to every wholesale house in America. These come so often that little attention is paid to them. When a wise house wishes salesmen, they either put out their scouts or go themselves directly after the men they want. And the shrewd head of a house is not looking for cheap men; he knows that a poor man is a great deal more expensive than a good one. Successful wholesalers do not bat their eyes at paying a first−class man a good price.

Recently I knew of one firm that had had a big salesman taken from them. What did they do to get another to take his place? The manager did not put out some cheap fellow, but he went to another man who, although he was unfamiliar with the territory, was a good shoe man, and guaranteed him that he would make four thousand dollars a year net, and gave him a good chance on a percentage basis of making six thousand. The experienced man in a line, although he has never traveled over the territory for which the wholesaler wishes a man, stands next in line for an open position. Houses know that a man who has done well on one territory in a very little while will establish a trade in another. One house that I know of has, in recent years, climbed right to the front because it would not let a thousand dollars or more stand in the way of hiring a first−class man. The head of this house went after a good salesman when he wanted one.

This is the way in which the head of a marvelously successful manufacturing firm hired many of their salesmen: They have this man talk to four different members of the firm single−handed; these men put all sorts of blocks in the way of the man whom they may possibly hire. They wish to test the fellow's grit. One successful salesman told me that when they hired him he talked to only one man, and only a few minutes; this man took him to the head of the house and said,

“Look here; there's no use of your putting this man through the turkish bath any longer; he is a man that I would buy goods from if I were a merchant.”

“Well, I'll take him, then,” said the president.

If I may offer a word of advice to him who hires the salesmen I would say this: Try to be sure when you hire a man to hire one that has been a success at whatever he has done. While it is best to get a man who is acquainted with your line and with the territory over which he is to travel, do not be afraid to put on a man who knows nothing of your merchandise and is a stranger to every one in the territory you wish to cover. If he has already been a successful salesman he will quickly learn about the goods he is to sell, and after one trip he will be acquainted with the territory.

The main thing for a salesman to know when you hire him is not how the trains run, not what your stuff is—he will soon learn this— but how to approach men! and gain their confidence! And it is needless for me to say that the one way to do this is to BE SQUARE!

A house does not wish a man like a young fellow I once knew of. He had been clerking in a store and had made application to a Louisville house for a position on the road. When he talked the matter over with the head of the house—it was a small one and always will be—they would not offer him any salary except on a commission basis, but they agreed to allow him five dollars a day for traveling expenses. He was to travel down in Kentucky. Five dollars a day looked mighty big to the young man who had been working for thirty dollars a month. He figured that he could hire a team and travel with that, and by stopping with his kin folks or farmers and feeding his own horses, that he could save from his expense money at least three dollars a day.

His territory was down in the Coon Range country where he was kin to nearly everybody. He lasted just one short trip.

A young fellow who once went to St. Louis is the sort of a man that the head of a house is looking for. When this young fellow went to call he put up a strong talk, but the 'old man' said to him:

“Come in and see us again. We haven't anything for you now.”

That same afternoon this fellow walked straight into the old man's office again, with a bundle under him arm.

“Well, I am here,” said he, “and I've brought my old clothes along. While I wish to be a salesman for you, put me to piling nail kegs or anything you please, and don't pay me a cent until you see whether or not I can work.”

The old man touched a button calling a department manager and said to him:

“Here, put this young man to work. He says he can pile nail kegs.”

In a couple of days the department manager went into the office again and said to the head of the house, “That boy is piling nail kegs so well that he can do something else.”

That same young fellow went from floor to floor. In less than two years he was on the road and made a brilliant record for the house. To−day he is general salesman for the state of Texas for a very large wholesale hardware house and is making several thousand dollars each year.

If a wholesaler cannot find a man who is experienced in his line in the territory that he wishes to cover, and cannot get a good experienced road man at all, the next best ones he turns to are his own stock boys. In fact, the stock is the training school for men on the road.

A bright young man, wherever he may be, if he wishes to get on the road, should form the acquaintance of traveling men, because lightning may sometime strike him and he will have a place before he knows it. A gentleman who is now manager of a large New York engraving house once told me how he hired one of his best salesmen.

"When I was on the road my business used to carry me into the colleges. Our house gets up class invitations and things of that kind. Now I got this man in this way," said he: "I especially disliked going to the Phillips−Exeter Academy at Exeter, New Hampshire, owing to the poor train service and worse hotel accommodation.

"The graduating class at this academy had a nice order to place, and I called with original designs and prices. The committee refused to decide until they had received designs and prices from our competitors, so there was nothing else to do but bide−a−wee. When I called I made it a point to make friends with the chairman, who hailed from South Dakota and was all to the good. He was bright and distinctly wise to his job. By a little scouting I found out when the last competing representative was to call and speak his little piece.

"The next day I took a 'flyer,' that is, called without making an appointment. I arranged to arrive at my man's room in the afternoon when his recitations were over. His greeting was characteristic of the westerner,—as if we had known one another all our lives. He was a runner and did the one hundred yards dash in ten seconds flat and was the school's champion. I talked athletics to beat the band and got him interested. He was unable to get the committee together until seven o'clock that evening, which meant that I would have to stay in the town over night, as the last train went to Boston around 6:30 o'clock. There was nothing else to do but stay, as you naturally know what bad business it would be to leave a committee about to decide.

"I saw a platinum photograph of myself sleeping in that third−class hotel. I kept on talking athletics, however, and the chairman was good enough to ask me to dine with him. After dinner we played billiards and he beat me. At 6:45 we adjourned to his room. He and his committee excused themselves to hold their meeting in a room on the floor below. I was smoking one of the chairman's cigars, and was congratulating myself that things looked encouraging. The cigar was a good one, too. In half an hour the committee returned. The fellows lined up on the sofa, side by side, while the chairman straddled his chair and addressed me as follows:

"'Well, Mr. Rogers, we have discussed the matter thoroughly and as impartially I think as any committee of fellows could do, who had the interest of their class seriously at heart. In a way we regret that you took the trouble to call, because, to speak frankly, we would rather write what we have to say, than to be placed in the somewhat embarrassing position of telling you orally.'

"My cigar, somehow or other, no longer tasted good, and I was holding it in an apathetic sort of a way, not caring whether it went out or not. The bum hotel loomed up in front of me also. Continuing, the chairman said:

"'We have received something like six other estimates from different firms, and I must say some of their designs are "peaches." There are two firms whose prices are lower than yours, too. We like your designs very much, but I think if you place yourself in our position you will see we have no other alternative but to place the order with another house.

"He shifted his position uneasily and added with that final air we know so well, 'I want to thank you for your interest and trouble and we certainly appreciate the opportunity of seeing what you had to offer.'

"This was a nice sugar coat on a bitter pill, but I didn't want to take my medicine. I stood up, prepared to make a strong and expiring effort and to explain what an easy thing it was for a firm to quote a low price, etc., when the chairman came over quickly with extended hand and said, 'Now, we understand how you feel, old man, but there is no use prolonging this matter, which I assure you we regret more than we express. However,' turning to the other fellows, 'I think we are all agreed on one thing, and that is we are willing to make an exception in this case, and,'—here the corners of his mouth twitched and his eyes brightened up, 'we will give you the order on one condition.' I quickly asked what the condition was. 'And that is,' all the other fellows were standing up, smiling, 'we will give you the order if you'll take us to the show to−night!'

"It was well done and a clever piece of acting.

"The show, by the way, held in the town opera house, was a thrilling melodrama, and positively, it was so rotten it was good. The heroine was a girl who sold peanuts in one of the Exeter stores, and the villain was the village barber; I have forgotten who the hero was, but he was a 'bird.' The best part of the play was near the end. The villain was supposed to have murdered the hero by smashing him on the head with an iron bar and then

pushing him into the river. At a critical stage, the hero walked serenely on the scene and confronted the villain. The villain assumed the good old stereotyped posture and shouted out with a horrified expression, 'Stand back, stand back, your hands is cold and slimy!' That busted up the show, as the audience, composed largely of the Academy boys, stood up as one and yelled. They finally started a cheer, 'Stand back, stand back, your hands is cold and slimy!' They repeated this cheer vigorously three times, and then crowded out of the house. That cheer can be heard at the Academy to−day.

"My chairman friend insisted upon putting me up for the night in a spare room in the dormitory; this saved my life.

"The next morning I joined the boys in chapel, and was very much surprised to find the entire student body and faculty clapping their hands when I became seated. This was certainly a new one on me. I turned to my chairman friend; he was grinning broadly as if he enjoyed the situation. What was I expected to do, for Heaven's sake—get up and make a speech? My mind was relieved by the President addressing the boys about alien topics. I learned afterwards that it was an old custom with Phillips−Exeter to applaud when a stranger entered the chapel. This is especially appropriate in the case of an old 'grad' returning, but certainly disturbing to an outsider.

"I did further business with my friend, also, when he was at Harvard. He did such a smooth job on me that when I became manager of my house I sent for him when we had the first opening on the road. I asked him how he would like to come with us. He came. He has been with our company now for two years and is getting on fine."

College boys as a rule are not looking for positions on the road, but if more of them would do so there would be more college graduates scoring a business success and more traveling men with the right sort of educational equipment. But they should begin young. While traveling on the road they would find many opportunities for self−advancement. The traveling man who will try can make almost anything he wishes of himself.

The head of the house must be on the lookout for the floater. In every city there are many professional job finders. About the only time they ever put up a good, strong line of conversation is when they talk for a job. After they get a good guaranteed salary they go to sleep until their contract is at an end, and then they hunt for another job. These are the chaps that the "old man" must look out for with a sharp eye.

When it is known that a good position in a house is open, scores of applications, by mail and in person, come in for the place from all kinds of men. I knew of one instance where a most capable head of a house thought well of one salesman who applied by letter. Before fully making up his mind about him, however, he sent a trusted man to look him up. He found that the man who made the application, while a capable salesman and a gentleman, was unfortunately a drunkard and a gambler.

Of this kind of man there are not so many. A man on the road who "lushes" and fingers chips does not last long. To be sure, most men on the road are cosmopolitan in their habits and they nearly all know, perhaps better than any other class of men, when to say, "no."

No less important than hiring salesmen is the handling of them. The house spoils for itself many a good man after it gets him. The easiest way is by writing kicking letters. The man on the road is a human being. Generally he has a home and a family and friends. He is working for them, straining every nerve that he may do something for the ones he cherishes. He takes a deep and constant interest in his business. He feels that he is a part of the firm he works for and knows full well that their interest is his interest and that he can only succeed for himself by making a success for the firm. When, feeling all of this within himself, he gets a kicking letter because he has been bold enough to break some little business rule when he knows it should have been done, he grows discouraged.

And, alas, for the comfort of the traveling man! there are too few houses that have due respect for his feelings. The traveling man is on the spot. He knows at first hand what should be done. His orders should be supreme. His work for a year should be considered as a whole. If, at the end of his contract, what he has done is not satisfactory, let him be told so in a lump. Continual petty hammering at him drives him to despair.

For example: I know of one firm in the wholesale hat business, that raised hob in a letter with their best man because he would, in selling dozen lots to customers, specify sizes on the goods that his customer wished,—a most absurd thing for the house to do. The merchant must, of course, keep his own stock clean and not become over−stocked on certain sizes. If he has been handling a certain "number" and has sold out all of the small sizes, only the large ones remaining, it would be foolish for him to buy regular sizes and get in his lot the usual proportion of large ones. All he needs and will need for several months, perhaps, will be the smaller run of sizes. Now, the salesman on the spot and the merchant know just what should be ordered, and if the house kicks on the

salesman on this point, as did this house, they act absurdly.

Not only do too many houses write kicking letters to their men on the road, but fail to show the proper appreciation for their salesmen's efforts to get good results. When a salesman has done good work and knows it, he loves to be told so, craves in the midst of his hard work a little word of good cheer. And the man handling salesmen who is wise enough to write a few words of encouragement and appreciation to his salesmen on the road, knows not how much these few words help them to succeed in greater measure. It is a mistake for the "Old Man" to feel that if he writes or says too many kind words to his salesmen, he will puff them up. This is the reason many refrain from giving words of encouragement. The man on the road, least of all men, is liable to get the swelled head. No one learns quicker than he that one pebble does not make a whole beach.

Another way in which a house can handle its salesmen badly is by not treating his trade right. Many firms that carry good strong lines persistently dog the customer after the goods have been shipped. Whenever a house abuses its customers it also does a wrong to its salesmen. I know of one firm, I will not say just where, that has had several men quit—and good salesmen, too—in the last two or three years, because this firm did not treat its salesmen's customers right. For this reason, and this reason only, the salesmen went to other firms, that knew how to handle them and their customers as men. With their new houses they are succeeding.

Too many heads of wholesale firms get "stuck on themselves" when they see orders rolling in to them. They fail to realize the hard work their salesmen do in getting these orders. I know of one firm that almost drove one of the best salesmen in the United States away from it for the reasons that I have given. They dogged him, they didn't write him a kind word, they badgered his trade, they thought they had him, hard and fast. Finally, however, he wrote to them that, contract or no contract, he was positively going to quit. Ah, and then you should have seen them bend the knee! This man traveled for a Saint Louis firm. His home was in Chicago, and when he came in home from his trip his house wrote him to come down immediately. He did not reply, but his wife wrote them—and don't you worry about the wives of traveling men not being up to snuff—that he had gone to New York. Next morning a member of the firm was in Chicago. He went at once to call upon their salesman's wife. He tried to jolly her along, but she was wise. He asked for her husband's address and she told him that the only address he had left was care of another wholesale firm in their line in New York,—she supposed he could reach her husband there. Then the Saint Louis man was wild. He put the wires to working at once and telegraphed: "By no means make any contract anywhere until you see us. Won't you promise this? Letter coming care of Imperial."

Then he was sweet as pie to the salesman's wife, took her and her daughter to the matinee, a nice luncheon, and all that. In a few days the salesman I speak of went down to Saint Louis. The members of his firm took off their hats to him and raised his salary a jump of $2,400 a year.

[Illustration: "He tried to jolly her along, but she was wise."]

How much trouble they would have saved themselves, and how much better feeling there would have been if they had only handled this man right in the beginning!

There are some heads of firms, however, who do know how to handle their salesmen. One of the very best men in the United States is head of a wholesale hardware firm. He has on the road more than a hundred men and they all fairly worship him. I remember many years ago seeing a letter that he had written to the boys on the road for him. He had been fishing and made a good catch. He sent them all photographs of himself and his big fish and told the boys that they mustn't work too hard, that they were all doing first rate, and that if they ever got where there was a chance to skin him at fishing, to take a day off and that he would give prizes to the men who would out−catch him. This is just a sample of the way in which he handles his men. Occasionally he writes a general letter to his men, cheering them along. He never loses a good man and has one of the best forces of salesmen in America. They have made his success and he knows it and appreciates it.

Another head of a firm who handles his salesmen well is in the wholesale shoe business. Twice each year he calls all of his salesmen together when he is marking samples. He asks them their opinion about this thing or that thing and listens to what his men have to say. He has built up the largest shoe business in the United States. After the marking of samples is all over, he gives a banquet to his men and has each one of them make a little speech. He himself addresses them, and when they leave the table there is a cordial feeling between the head of the house and his traveling men.

He also puts wonderful enthusiasm into his men. Here are some of his mottoes: "Enthusiasm is our great staple," "Get results," "No slow steppers wanted around this house," "If this business is not your business, send

in your trunks," "All at it, always at it, brings success." He has taught his salesmen a college yell which runs like this: "Keep−the−qual−ity−up." Only a few years ago the watchword of this house was: "Watch us—Five millions" (a year). Now it is: "A million a month," and by their methods they will soon be there.

This same man has the keenest appreciation of the value of a road experience. Some time ago he was in need of an advertising manager. If he had followed the usual practice he would have gone outside the house and hired a professional "ad manager." But he had a notion that the man who knew enough about salesmanship and about his special goods to sell them on the road could "make sentiment" for those same goods by the use of printers' ink. Therefore he put one of his crack salesmen into the position and now pays him $6,000 a year. And the man has made good in great shape.

Nor does he stop with promoting men from the ranks of his organization. If a salesman in his house makes a good showing, he fastens him to the firm still tighter by selling to him shares of good dividend−paying stock.

He knows one thing that too few men in business do know: That a man can best help himself by helping others!

CHAPTER XVIII. HEARTS BEHIND THE ORDER BOOK.

With all of his power of enduring disappointment and changing a shadow to a spot of sunshine, there yet come days of loneliness into the life of the commercial traveler—days when he cannot and will not break the spell. There is a sweet enchantment, anyway, about melancholy; 'tis then that the heart yearns for what it knows awaits it. Perhaps the wayfarer has missed his mail; perhaps the wife whom he has not seen for many weeks, writes him now that she suffers because of their separation and how she longs for his return.

I sat one day in a big red rocking chair in the Knutsford Hotel, in Salt Lake. I had been away from home for nearly three months. It was drawing near the end of the season. The bell boys sat with folded hands upon their bench; the telegraph instrument had ceased clicking; the typewriter was still. The only sound heard was the dripping of the water at the drinking fount. The season's rush was over. Nothing moved across the floor except the shadows chasing away the sunshine which streamed at times through the skylight. Half a dozen other wanderers— all disconsolate—sat facing the big palm in the center of the room. No one spoke a word. Perhaps we were all turning the blue curls of smoke that floated up from our cigars into visions of home.

The first to move was one who had sat for half an hour in deep meditation. He went softly over to the music box near the drinking fount and dropped a nickel into the slot. Then he came back again to his chair and fell into reverie. The tones of the old music box were sweet, like the swelling of rich bells. They pealed through the white corridor "Old Kentucky Home." Every weary wanderer began to hum the air. When the chorus came, one, in a low sweet tenor, sang just audibly:

"Weep no more, my lady,

"Weep no more to−day;

"We will sing one song, for my old Kentucky home,

"For my old Kentucky home far away."

When the music ceased he of meditation went again and dropped in another coin. Out of the magic box came once more sweet strains—this time those of Cayalleria Rusticana, which play so longingly upon the noblest passions of the soul.

The magic box played its entire repertoire, which fitted so well the mood of the disconsolate listeners. The first air was repeated, and the second. This was enough—too much. Quietly the party disbanded, leaving behind only the man of meditation to listen to the dripping of the fount.

Not only are there moments of melancholy on the road, but those of tragedy as well. The field of the traveling man is wide and, while there bloom in it fragrant blossoms and in it there wax luscious fruits, the way is set with many thorns.

During the holidays of 1903 I was in a western city. On one of these days, long to be remembered, I took luncheon with a young man who had married only a few months before. This trip marked his first separation from his wife since their wedding. Every day there came a letter from "Dolly" to "Ned"—some days three. The wife loves her drummer husband; and the most loved and petted of all the women in the world is the wife of the man on the road. When they are apart they long to be together; when they meet they tie again the broken threads of their life−long honeymoon.

As we sat at the table over our coffee a bell boy brought into my friend letter "97" for that trip. His wife numbered her letters. Reading the letter my friend said to me: "Jove, I wish I could be at home in Chicago to−day, or else, like you, have Dolly along with me. Just about now I would be going to the matinee with her. She writes me she is going to get tickets for to−day and take my sister along, as that is the nearest thing to having me. Gee, how I'd love to be with her!"

*After luncheon we went to our sample rooms, which adjoined. Late in the afternoon I heard the newsboys calling out: "Extra! Extra! All about the * * *" I know not what. My friend came into my room.*

"What is that they are calling out?" he said.

We listened. We heard the words: "All about the Great Chicago Theater Fire."

Three steps at a time we bounded down stairs and bought papers. When my friend saw the head−lines he exclaimed: "Hundreds burned alive in the Iroquois Theater. Good God, man, Dolly went to that theater to−

day!"

"Pray God she didn't," said I.

We rushed to the telegraph office and my friend wired to his father: "Is Dolly lost? Wire me all particulars and tell me the truth."

We went to the newspaper office to see the lists of names as they came in over the wire, scanning each new list with horrified anxiety. On one sheet we saw his own family name. The given name was near to, but not exactly, that of his wife.

May a man pray for the death of his near beloved kin—for the death of one he loves much—that she may be spared whom he loves more? Not that, but he will pray that both be spared.

Back to the hotel we ran. No telegram. Back to the newspaper office and back to the hotel again.

A messenger boy put his hand on the hotel door. Three leaps, and my friend snatched the message from the boy. He started to open it. He faltered. He pressed the little yellow envelope to his heart, then handed it to me.

"You open it and pray for me," he said.

The message read: "All our immediate family escaped the horrible disaster. Dolly is alive and thankful. She tried but could not get tickets. Thank God."

All do not escape the calamity of death, however, as did my friend Ned. The business of the man on the road is such that he is ofttimes cut off from his mail and even telegrams for several days at a time. Again, many must be several days away from their homes utterly unable to get back. When death comes then it strikes the hardest blow.

A friend of mine once told me this story:

"I was once opened up in an adjoining room to a clothing man's. When he left home his mother was very low and not expected to live for a great while; but on his trip go he must. He had a large family, and many personal debts. He could not stay at home because no one else could fill his place on the road. The position of a traveling man, I believe, is seldom fully appreciated. It is with the greatest care that, as you know, a wholesale house selects its salesmen for the road. When a good man gets into a position it is very hard—in fact impossible—for him to drop out and let some one else take his place for one trip even. Of course you know there isn't any place that some other man cannot fill, but the other man is usually so situated that either he will not or does not care to make a change.

"My clothing friend was at Seattle on his trip. His home, where his mother lay sick, was in Saint Louis—nearly four days away. The last letter he had received from home told him that his mother was sinking. The same day on which he received this letter a customer came into his room about ten o'clock—and he was a tough customer, too. He found fault with everything and tore up the samples. He was a hard man to deal with. You know how it is when you strike one of these suspicious fellows. He has no confidence in anybody and makes the life of us poor wanderers anything but a joyous one.

"Under the circumstances, of which he said nothing, my clothing friend was not in the best mood. He could not help thinking of home and feeling that he should be there; yet, at the same time, he had a duty to do. He simply must continue the trip. He had just taken on his position with a new firm and needed to show, on this trip, the sort of stuff in him. He had been doing first rate; still, he must keep it up.

"I happened to drop in, as I was not busy for a few minutes, while he was showing goods. I never like to go into a man's sample room while he is waiting on any one. Often a new man on the road gets in the way of doing this and doesn't know any better. Selling a bill of goods, even to an old customer, takes a whole lot of energy. No man likes to be interrupted while he is at it. When it comes to persuading a new man to buy of you, you have, frequently, a hard task. There are many reasons why a customer should not leave his old house. Maybe he is still owing money to the firm he has been dealing with and needs credit. Maybe the salesman for that firm is a personal friend. These are two things hard to overcome—financial obligations and friendship.

"At any rate, my clothing friend was having much difficulty. He was making the best argument he could, telling the customer it mattered not what firm he dealt with, that firm was going to collect a hundred cents on the dollar when his bill was due; and that any firm he dealt with would be under obligations to him for the business he had given to it instead of his being under obligations to the firm. He was also arguing against personal friendship and saying he would very soon find out whether the man he was dealing with was his friend or not if he quit buying goods from him. He was getting down to the hard pan argument that the merchant, under all circumstances, should do his business where he thought he could do it to best advantage to himself.

"The merchant would not start to picking out a line himself, so my friend laid on a table a line of goods and was, as a final struggle, trying to persuade the merchant to buy that selection, a good thing to do. It is often as easy to sell a merchant a whole line of goods as one item. But the merchant said no.

"Just as I started out of the room, in came a bell boy with a telegram. My clothing friend, as he read the message, looked as if he were hitched to an electric wire. He stood shocked—with the telegram in his hand—not saying a word. Then he turned to me, handed me the message and, without speaking, went over, laid down on the bed, and buried his face in a pillow. Poor fellow. I never felt so sorry for anybody in my life! The message told that his mother was dead.

"I asked the stubborn customer to come into the next room, where I showed him the message.

"'After all, a "touch of pity makes the whole world akin",' the merchant said to me:

"'Just tell your friend, when he is in shape again to talk business, that he may send me the line he picked out and that I really like it first rate."

Sometimes the tragedies of the road show a brighter side. Once, an old time Knight of the Grip, said to me, as we rode together:

"Do you know, a touching, yet a happy thing, happened this morning down in Missoula?

"I was standing in my customer's store taking sizes on his stock. I heard the notes of a concertina and soon, going to the front door, I saw a young girl singing in the street. In the street a good looking woman was pulling the bellows of the instrument. Beside her stood two girls—one of ten, another of about fourteen. They took turns at singing—sometimes in the same song.

"All three wore neat black clothes—not a spark of color about them except the sparkling keys of the concertina. They were not common looking, poorly clad, dirty street musicians. They were refined, even beautiful. The little group looked strangely out of place. I said to myself: 'How have these people come to this?'

"How those two girls could sing! Their voices were sweet and full. I quit my business, and a little bunch of us—two more of the boys on the road having joined me—stood on the sidewalk.

"The little girl sang this song," continued my companion, reading from a little printed slip:

"Dark and drear the world has grown as I wan−der
all a−lone,
And I hear the breezes sob−bing thro' the pines.
I can scarce hold back my tears, when the southern
moon ap−pears,
For 'tis our humble cottage where it shines;
Once again we seem to sit, when the eve−ning lamps
are lit,
With our faces turned to−ward the golden west,
When I prayed that you and I ne'er would have to
say 'Good−bye,'
But that still to−gether we'd be laid to rest.

"As she sang, a lump kind of crawled up in my throat. None of us spoke.

"She finished this verse and went into the crowd to sell printed copies of their songs, leaving her older sister to take up the chorus. And I'll tell you, it made me feel that my lot was not hard when I saw one of those sweet, modest little girls passing around a cup, her mother playing in the dusty street, and her sister singing,—to just any one that would listen.

"The chorus was too much for me. I bought the songs. Here it is:

CHORUS.

"Dear old girl, the rob−in sings a−bove you,
Dear old girl, it speaks of how I love you,
The blind−ing tears are fall−ing,
As I think of my lost pearl,
And my broken heart is call−ing,
Calling you, dear old girl.

"Just as the older sister finished this chorus and started to roll down the street a little brother, who until now

had remained in his baby carriage unnoticed, the younger girl came where we were. I had to throw in a dollar. We all chipped in something. One of the boys put his fingers deep into the cup and let drop a coin. Tears were in his eyes. He went to the hotel without saying a word.

"The little girl went away, but soon she came back and said: 'One of you gentlemen has made a mistake. You aimed, mama says, to give me a nickel, but here is a five−dollar gold piece.'

"'It must be the gentleman who has gone into the hotel,' said I.

"'Then I'll go find him,' said the little girl. 'Where is it?'"

"Well, sir, what do you suppose happened? The little girl told the man who'd dropped in the five, how her father, who had been well to do, was killed in a mine accident in Colorado and that although he was considerable to the good, creditors just wiped up all he had left his family. The mother—the family was Italian—had taught her children music and they boldly struck out to make their living in the streets. It was the best they could do.

"The man who had put in the five was a jewelry salesman from New York. While out on a trip he had lost his wife and three children in the Slocum disaster. He just sent the whole family,—the mother, the two sisters, and the baby—to New York and told them to go right into his home and live there—that he would see them through.

"I was down at the depot when the family went aboard, and it was beautiful to see the mother take that man's hand in both of hers and the young girls hug him and kiss him like he was their father."