



CANVASSING FOR TRADE.

Editor BOOKS AND NOTIONS:

Sir, I desire to give my experience regarding "Canvassing for Trade." After several years' experience in the book and stationery trade, and viewing with some concern the amount of money yearly taken from the people by book canvassers, I concluded that if it were possible I would in some way prevent the money going into what seems an illegitimate channel. I say illegitimate, advisedly; for, as a rule, book agents pay no taxes, rent, or license, and consequently make large profits on very small investments. A difficulty which the bookseller must face at the outset is that if he wishes to be successful he must qualify himself or have a qualified man to sell subscription books. It is a mistake to suppose that anyone can take orders for a book. There is as much special knowledge and tact required as is necessary in a commercial man, if one would be a successful book canvasser. If the bookseller has not the knowledge himself, he must pay for experienced help, and to do so, must give away by far the larger portion of his profits. If, on the other hand, he proposes to give it his personal attention, other matters are likely to suffer. Then an experienced collector is even more necessary than the experienced canvasser, or the bookseller will find himself buying some very costly experience. Often a great deal of annoyance and trouble is occasioned by subscribers declining to accept delivery of their book or being unable to pay when the time for delivery comes. My experience after handling a very large number of subscription books in connection with my other business, extending over a period of some five or six years, is that the subscription book business is a very troublesome department of the bookseller's trade, and the returns unsatisfactory when the amount of time, money and worry necessarily expended to make it a success are considered.

As to canvassing for trade in the stationery department, I can scarcely see how one is to help himself if he is to keep his head above water, for offices are systematically canvassed those days, and the stationer who does not do so is likely to find his trade most surely slipping from his grasp. As to whether it is wiser to engage a special hand to do the canvassing, or to have it done occasionally by one of the clerks, is a question that must be regulated largely by the size of the field and nature of business to be done. My own custom has been to have the work done by one of the hands from the store occasionally, as the circumstances seemed to demand it. I would be glad to hear from others in the trade as to their methods in this latter particular. I want to say this, however, that a good canvasser who will stay with his job is worth his weight in gold.

Yours sincerely,

JNO. H. FERGUSON, Winnipeg.

Editor BOOKS AND NOTIONS:

Sir, Several editorials and a number of letters have appeared in BOOKS

AND NOTIONS during the last three or four months on "Canvassing for Trade."

My own feelings are decidedly against canvassing. The canvasser is becoming such an intolerable nuisance that the long suffering householder will some day rise in his might and destroy him.

It is quite probable that canvassing might considerably increase the sales of booksellers without increasing their profits. Booksellers usually find enough to do without canvassing personally, and persons who will accept employment of that kind are some times not the most trustworthy. My own experience in selling goods through agents has not been encouraging. Manufacturers and wholesale dealers might take a different view of the matter. To them it would mean increased sales without the annoyances of canvassing from house to house, and collections without the large proportion of loss which is almost certain to follow.

If, however, the sale of goods by canvassers becomes general, would booksellers continue doing business as at present, paying high rent, taxes and all the other expenses of a respectable store? I think it is more likely that the business would degenerate. The booksellers now doing business would either discontinue or adopt the new method, and the bookseller of the future would rent a cheap room for storage, and the wholesale men might then have a less responsible class of customers to deal with.

Perhaps I am behind the times in my views, but it appears to me the objections to canvassing far outweigh the advantages.

Yours truly,

M. Y. KEATING.

St. Catharines, Ont.

WHEN ADVERTISING DON'T PAY.

Many business firms who ought to advertise persistently refuse to do so because they have tried advertising to a limited extent and failed to get any direct benefit from it. Their trial of the experiment began and ended with an insignificant card continued for perhaps three or six months, and the result, of course, was what might have been expected—a dismal failure. The money expended might have been put to better use, we confess.

No one with ordinary common sense ought to expect a very small advertisement to pay unless it is continued for a very great length of time. But small advertisements are something which should never be encouraged, especially when they apply to houses which can afford to advertise on a larger scale. They are rarely, if ever, satisfactory, because they can never bring the results that advertising should bring, when it is done at all.

Judicious advertising always pays. The use of the right mediums and a proper proportion of space, to enable the making of an effective display, are always productive of good results; and when advertising is done on this plan it is never discontinued by live business men who have anything worth advertising.

We never hear a complaint made by any business house that advertising has not paid them but we can easily trace the cause. The firm in question has either advertised in a half-way fashion or been too timorous to stick to it until the results were satisfactory.—*Dry Goods Chronicle.*

AN IMPROVEMENT IN CHECK BOOKS.

There are few merchants of standing in the commercial world who do not use and appreciate the counter check book. In many cases by adopting the rule of giving to each customer a bill of goods purchased on credit, and retaining a copy thereof, a system has been established which has been the means of saving hundreds of dollars every year to the merchants adopting the system. That counter check books more than pay their cost every day of the year, is the testimony of all who use them systematically. Thousands of merchants, nevertheless, lose money daily by a neglect to charge goods sold on credit. To avoid such loss the adoption of the check book is a necessity. It saves losses by thoughtlessness or carelessness. Cash sales are recorded and the duplicate placed in the till; while the credit duplicate is placed on the charge file. The salesman thus gets into the habit of recording every sale.

A new style of check book is now being placed on the market, which has an advantage over the old kind, in that no carbon leaf is required, yet every page copies to a duplicate bill with neatness, clearness and permanency. It often happens with the old style that parts of the black leaf are worn out or torn off, or the leaf may be misplaced or left out, and thus the copy is imperfect or wanting. This new check book obviates all such difficulties, and it is impossible to have an imperfect copy, while no placing of leaves is necessary, thus saving much time and trouble. The carbon paper is discarded and the record is made with a printed heading and duplicate alone. This counter check book is entitled the "Happy Thought," and is handled exclusively in Canada by the J. K. Cranston Store and Office Supply Co., Galt, Ont. This book is cheaper than other counter books and must eventually displace the older kinds. Wide-awake merchants would do well to examine it carefully. Another strong feature of the book is the tally sheet, which is placed on the cover opposite to the writing pages, and can thus be easily used by the salesman to enter the amount of each cash or credit sale. These when added up give the total of each clerk's sales, and thus prove an incentive to them and produce a good-natured rivalry as to who can sell the most. Also, when these sales are added up the total amounts should correspond with the sum total of the checks, and thus an accurate result is obtainable. Any merchant can procure a sample of the book by writing J. K. Cranston, Galt, Ont., whose advertisement appears in another column.