

FIRST PRIZE ESSAY.

HOW TO DRAW AND KEEP TRADE.

JAS. C. CAMPBELL, WOODSTOCK.



It is alleged that of one hundred men who engage in business, only three are successful. This may or may not be an exact proportion; it, however, serves to prove that the notion commonly held by those out of business of the ease with which money is made in business is entirely wrong. From the regular way in which the totals of failures foot up, causing a routine of commercial depressions, panics and disasters, it is clear that little has been effected in the direction of disabusing the inexperienced public of this notion. It may be a useless task to attempt it; but of this we are assured: That until business principles can be firmly embedded in the mind of the intending merchant, and every fancy of leaving to chance what should be carefully decided by reason is stamped out, there will be no material increase in the numbers who succeed. The task is not hopeless; there are no quicker minds than those possessed by the merchants. Few, if any, require perception in the same degree as the dry goods merchant; so, although different men will attribute their success to different causes, there are yet found to be, beneath all conditions of a special nature, many general principles which all agree to be necessary to ultimate success. If these principles can be made the data from which other merchants will decide and act, is it unreasonable to expect that a larger proportion will gain the success they seek?

LOCATION.

The first decision of importance that will meet the intending merchant is the choice of a business stand. Men at first built cities for mutual protection; they now build them for greater convenience and despatch in doing business. Those thoroughfares having the largest traffic will, therefore, be the most convenient for the greatest number. Again, if the city is large enough to enable different classes to habitually use different streets, the best for dry goods will be that one on which the most beautiful styles are seen; if possible, among other dry goods stores. Power in trade is gained when the store and firm are so much before the public that the articles they sell cannot be thought of without being identified with the store. Rents asked in such favored locations may appear high in comparison with other localities, but, if the extra expense per day be considered with the extra trade that will result, the increase will appear insignificant. Allow for the growth you are determined to make, for the location should not be changed unless circumstances urge it; frequent transplanting weakens growth. Have both the interior and exterior appearance as neat as taste can make them, paying special care to have the interior arrangement so as to save time and labor in serving the customers.

BUYING.

In possession of a location, the stock is the next concern. To buy for an increasing and paying business demands that the art of selection be well learned. The endeavor must be to buy only those goods that will sell. Have determination enough to throw out goods that your best judgment tells you are bad or ugly, even though they be fashionable at the present moment. The few exceptions where extravagant styles are sold

at large profits will not balance the ultimate loss made in clearing out the remains. Sensible people in dress ever make the most satisfactory customers. The majority of them will buy rather better than medium priced goods. Cater for a good trade. Retail importers should guard against buying a six-months' stock in foreign markets. Rapid ocean and railway service will deliver repeat orders at your station in from ten to eighteen days after leaving Britain, France, or Germany. There are new styles constantly coming into the market, and prestige is lost if these are not in stock when asked for; also the job lines offered by manufacturers and wholesale merchants can be handled to advantage if the stocks have not been overloaded. These three points serve to draw trade when under usual conditions it would be dull. Through the season regular and frequent visits should be made to the Canadian markets, travelers' samples looked over, advertisements to the trade carefully watched, and by every means presented the fund of information regarding the dry goods business kept up to date.

ADVERTISING.

Advertising is to sales what powder is to shells: It is the force that does the distant work. The smokeless kinds are the best for both purposes. Plain facts told in plain words will bring more and better trade than any superlative combination of words ever set up in display type. Few people know exactly what they want until the retail merchant in a measure guides their choice. Thus the advertisement should contain leading points of excellence in the goods, mention of prevailing styles at the recognized fashion centres, and, if possible, a forecast of what will be worn. Dwell on quality rather than price. Identify the firm with a certain position in the local papers and regular journals. They supply readers who, as a class, are the prosperous people of the Dominion and profitable customers to procure. Many novel schemes are gotten up for various kinds of advertising; they should be carefully examined before entered upon. Few of them are profitable to anyone but their promoters. Always advertise just before the goods are wanted, and bear in mind that the majority of the readers are women. This refers to advertising articles exclusively for the male sex as well as all articles for the female sex. Have one main idea for each insertion, say it strongly, support it by examples and prove it by particulars. Don't exaggerate, rather say a little less than the whole truth. Try to convince the public in advertising, as in window display, that your stock is comprehensive. If possible draw a diagram indicating display lines. The results in the appearance of your space will justify the pains taken. Don't meddle in personal matters. If a neighbor attacks you, don't retaliate, the people will learn the truth themselves quicker than you can teach them, and like all lessons of experience, they will be remembered.

A small card of thanks, mentioning leading lines on the reverse side, placed in each parcel is a polite way of showing customers you appreciate their patronage, and forms a link to bring them back to the store.

Circulars carefully addressed to the lady of the house on special occasions will prove valuable. Enclose a few samples with prices and particulars; they will be carefully gone over at home. But any such special feature should be both unique and neat. It is worth doing well.

HELP.

Polite, energetic clerks are valuable in gaining trade. They should in every case be the very best the business can afford.