

# THE OFFICE

DEVOTED TO THE  
OFFICE STAFFS OF  
BUSINESS  
ESTABLISHMENTS

## VALUE OF GOOD STATIONERY.

**T**HE stationery which a business house uses in its correspondence will always be one of the first and most important criterions by which the world will judge that firm's standing. First impressions are lasting and in many cases the first impression that a correspondent gets of a firm's business methods is the stationery on which the correspondence is carried on. Cheap printing, or worse yet, poor writing paper without any printing at all, can hardly produce a favorable impression of careful, up-to-date methods. On the other hand, neat and cleanly printed stationery cannot help but give an impression of financial soundness, which evidences of seemingly lower standards in other lines cannot efface.

Many small retail merchants complain of the difficulty they find in procuring credit from large manufacturers. "We always pay our bills promptly, our credit rating is good, but there seems to be something else that is wrong which makes it so hard for us to get credit." This "something" which makes it so difficult for these merchants to get the desired credit is the carelessness shown in the get-up of their correspondence stationery.

In many instances, the appearance of the letters which merchants write to the manufacturers is so slipshod and careless that the credit man rightly takes it for granted that that merchant is not running his business on lines which will enable him to take care of himself in competition with twentieth century methods, and therefore he is doubly watchful before he will take this merchant as an acceptable risk.

Nor is this effect of cheap stationery confined alone to dealings with the large manufacturers, but to the dealings with small customers, in the merchant's own city. If they receive letters and statements written on poor stationery they will have a correspondingly poor opinion of the merchant's methods and they will regulate their dealings with him according to this standard.

If, however, a merchant's stationery is neat, clean and attractive, it will at once produce a favorable impression both on the manufacturer and on the customer. The credit man will find it harder to refuse credit, and the small customer, impressed by the business-like appearance of letters and statements, will pay his bills more promptly and place greater confidence in any statement which a merchant may make in his letter.

Good business-like stationery is not expensive. In fact, it costs but little, if anything, more than cheap printing. Go to a good, reliable printer, and see to it that he gives you good service. An investment here will pay big dividends, but economy in stationery is a penny saved and dollars thrown away.

## THE TELEPHONE.

**O**NE outward expression of the business is the girl who answers the telephone. What would you think if I told you that a prospective customer called you up the other day and that the nasty, harsh-voiced, ill-tempered treatment he received over the wire gave him a most disagreeable impression of your concern.

He got neither the telephone connection, the information, nor the consideration he expected—and you did not get the business. By such a slender thread sometimes hangs an order.

Or would you believe that a certain buyer intended to divide his order between your house and a competitor, that jewel of a girl answered the 'phone, her well-modulated voice, her respectful interest in his behalf, put him in a pleasant and receptive frame of mind.

She said: "Mr. Blank is not in his office at the moment, but I shall send for him at once."

By being at the 'phone in person you got the entire order. Perhaps you recall the incident.

## PRICING STOCKS.

**T**HE inability to fix prices properly in one of the most prolific sources of failure in business." This remark was made by the manager of a large department store. In speaking of the various problems that confront the retailer, he said: "A great deal has been written on the subject of advertising, buying, and store management, but writers in trade journals have had very little to say about pricing goods. My experience has taught me that no branch of merchandising is more important or requires more careful study than does the pricing of the stock. Pricing goods is an art which requires much experience and rare judgment."

"In a great many stores it is the custom to fix prices on what is practically a horizontal basis of percentage. The merchant estimates the running expenses of the store at, say 15 per cent, to this he adds his profits which we will also call 15 per cent. This makes a total of 30 per cent which is added to the cost price on every thing in the store. Of course there are a few exceptions, but the merchant may be said to have but one percentage of profit on his entire stock. It saves trouble, perhaps, to mark goods in this way, but it is extremely poor business policy.

"There are many things to be taken into consideration in figuring prices. Competition is, perhaps, the strongest factor; but the nature of the goods and the demand for them are also important. Then, too, the style and popularity of goods give the price-maker an opportunity to display his judgment. For instance, in a lot of suits costing practically the same amount, some will, on account of the style, sell easily for a third more than others. The same is true of dress goods, silks, or in fact, almost any other class of merchandise. There are always some customers who are willing to pay a little more for style and the merchant who does not take advantage of this fact is not alive to his own interests. By marking up the more salable goods he is enabled to reduce the selling price on goods that are less desirable.

"Again, in pricing goods, the merchant will often find it a good advertising policy to mark certain articles down to a very narrow margin of profit. This gives a store the best possible kind of advertising, but it also cuts down the average of profit and every merchant is in