

Practical Hints on Advertising.

By CHARLES AUSTIN BATES, New York.

I believe, as a matter of fact, that very few printers believe in advertising. As a matter of fact, very few advertising men believe in advertising. They all think it is a good thing for the other fellow, but not for themselves. When it comes down to giving up money for advertising, they wish to be excused. The number of advertising men who really have confidence in advertising is comparatively small. Newspaper publishers are the ones of all others who ought to believe in advertising, and who ought to advertise, yet they are the hardest people in the world to interest in an advertising proposition. Printers who really advertise are few and far between. Of course, the job department of a country weekly is always advertised. That is to say, some space in the paper is devoted to announcing that "Job Printing is done at this office." Generally this advertisement is poorly displayed and, of course, it doesn't cost anything. I know from experience that it pays to advertise a printing business, but I also know from experience that it is extremely hard for a printer to make up his mind to advertise, and to find the money wherewith to do it. Most printers do not charge enough for their work. Most of them don't know what it costs to produce the work that they sell, and so in making an estimate they merely guess at the price. One of the best regulated printing offices I know of ran through the month of January with more business than they had ever had before, and found at the end of the month that they had lost \$350. The printing offices of the country are continually running at a loss. The printer who is running his shop by guess couldn't save himself by advertising.

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The printer is one of the few people who ought not advertise in the daily or weekly newspapers. He ought to get his business by circulars, booklets, cards, etc. One advantage which the circular has over the newspaper ad. is that it is in itself a sample of the printer's work. If it is well done it will surely impress its recipient. The best way I know of for the average printer to advertise is to make up a lot of samples of any particular kind of printed matter and send them out with a definite price. If the price is reasonably low orders will result, and if they are

properly attended to plenty of trade will ensue.

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When advertisers learn that it is not necessary to be startling or smart or funny, advertising will be better and more profitable. The object of an advertisement is to tell people what you have for sale and how good it is. The more plainly and concisely this information can be conveyed the better will the advertisement be.

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Everybody who reads the magazines, knows the Murphy Varnish advertising. I suppose most of the people who have thought about the matter at all have wondered whether or not they sold varnish. Probably no one knows except Mr. Franklin Murphy, and probably he will not tell. It has always seemed to me that these ads. did not talk enough about Murphy's Varnish. They have been beautifully dignified, and some of them have made interesting reading.

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Some time ago I bought a new desk. After a short time the top of it began to have a dull, milky appearance. A visitor noticed it, and said: "The man who made this desk did not evidently use Murphy's Varnish." Good! But when I bought the desk I didn't know whether it was varnished with Murphy Varnish, or Valentine Varnish, or with Bill Smith's Varnish. As a matter of fact, it isn't any of my business whose varnish the maker of the desk used so long as it was good. I have complained about this varnish, and the maker of the desk is going to fix it up for me. I haven't even yet insisted on having Murphy's Varnish used. The only thing that I do insist upon is that the top of the desk shall show the beautiful grain of the wood, and I don't care whether the maker of the desk uses varnish on it at all. All I care for is the result, and he is responsible for the result. If he can't fix it up, all right. He will have to take the desk out and give me a new one. Perhaps he also reads the magazines, and by the time he has given me a new desk he will remember some of the Murphy arguments, and will believe that he can save trouble by investing in Murphy's Varnish. The Murphy ads. are apparently addressed to the consumer—that is to say, to the users of desks and carriages and houses and other varnished things. They probably reach the makers

of these at the same time, but in an expensive way.

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It is possible for an idea to be too new. We don't need any twentieth century ideas for about four years. Until then it will be a good deal better for us to use 1890 ideas. A man might just as well be five years behind the times as five years ahead of them. I am inclined to think that he had better be five years behind than five years ahead, because if he is behind he will have plenty of company and if he is ahead he will be almighty lonesome.

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There are a lot of people in the world who do not appreciate smartness. They are just common, ordinary, everyday people; the kind of people who buy goods and generally pay cash for them. Lincoln said God must have liked common people because he made such a lot of them. The advertiser who shoots over their heads had better save his money.

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I wish somebody would tell me how it would be possible to make everyone understand exactly what advertising really is. It is one of the simplest things in the world if you look at it in the right way. It is simply telling a plain story. It consists merely of giving information to possible buyers. It does not mean understatement or over-statement. The more nearly an advertiser can picture the goods of the store, the better the advertisement. It should be made attractive, of course but attractiveness does not necessarily mean smartness or newness. An ad. should be made attractive in just the same way that a magazine article is made attractive, by illustration. There need not be anything startling about the illustration. There need not be anything smart about it. It ought to convey an idea applicable to the goods talked about in the advertisement. It need not be original. It may be a copy of a picture one hundred years old. If it is a handsome picture, and suitable to the subject, it is just as good as a new picture. There are very few new pictures, anyway.

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There are three accepted theories in advertising that I believe to be utterly wrong and responsible for much of the ill-success that attends advertising effort. The first one of these is that "The American people like to be humbugged."