

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A HARDWARE MAN.

The typical hardware man, says the *Ironmonger*, is often a different personage from his neighbor in business—the grocer, the tailor and the jeweler—and all because of this reflex action of the man and his occupation. The grocer appeals to the stomach of his customer, the tailor and jeweler to his vanity, and the dry goods merchant to the artistic tastes of his customer's wife. But there is something dreadfully earnest about the hardware man's pursuit. His business is not that on the gay and frothy side of life. His wares represent civilization. He traffics in the implements whereby nature is subdued. Power, conquest, multiplication of strength, progress in enlightenment, dexterity in action, constitute the stock in trade that passes over or around his counter at every sale. Metal implements that are tools of strength, forged in glowing heat, beaten into shape under tremendous pressure—these are the wares he handles. Consciously or unconsciously, the typical hardware dealer inhibits the spirit of his goods. There is something rugged and sterling in his makeup, a trace of the General Grant. The fiber of his personality is that of unyielding metal. It commands respect, repels in vasion and overcomes obstacles. The grocer is suave and cheery, harmonizing himself with the appetite of his customers. The tailor is wrapped up in the contemplation of the fit of his garments. The mind of the dry goods merchant runs to feminine fineries and laces. The hardware man is made of sterner stuff. He represents the accumulated material forces of the ages.

## BOOK-KEEPING AND BANKRUPTCY.

There is no royal road to success in business any more than there is to scholarship. Success is the legitimate result of continuous and patient effort, for the success that comes of bold ventures and lucky strokes is, after all, "luck," and cannot in any way be deemed the reward of legitimate business. One of the chief means to the attainment of success—in fact, the chief of all—lies in diligent attention to the books. An English judge in bankruptcy, a man of wide and ripe experience in an exclusively commercial district, once stated that in all his time he "had never yet seen a firm or individual come as bankrupts before his court, whose books were properly kept." This may seem a very sweeping assertion, but its truth is almost self-evident. Legitimate business is not a series of rash speculations, but is of a routine nature, and may be correctly followed in a set of books from day to day. Its losses, its gains, its fluctuations, may be watched closely, and the merchant or firm whose books are so kept that they could in a very short time make out a correct balance sheet of assets and liabilities, could not go very far wrong. Their fingers would be, as it were, on the pulse of their business; and with every acceleration or retardation of its normal rate of beating faithfully recorded, they would be able to apply the necessary remedies in time. No leakage could go on in any department that would

not pretty soon reveal itself. Properly kept books would show the worth of their employees and, where losses occur, would enable them to locate and remedy them. Profits also would reveal themselves and, what would be occasionally of great value, would show themselves, not as spread over the business generally, but as coming from particular sources. Such information would show what lines to develop and sometimes what to avoid, and would go far to insure success. With such mentors at command, the merchant need never put his foot far in untried ventures, nor need he be afraid of pushing what has been demonstrated as profitable lines. The merchant's books should be to him what the barometer is to the wary mariner. By studying the notice given by his little instrument, the mariner is able to make the most of every favoring breeze, while the storm, the hurricane or cyclone find him prepared to ride it out without damage. We have seen occasional examples of firms coming to grief unexpectedly, to the immense surprise of everybody, very often including the firm itself. Get behind the scenes in such cases and examine the books, and you will find them kept in such a manner, and so little studied by the firm, that their pages, instead of supplying the information necessary to successful prosecution of the business, have really been as false beacons luring it to ruin. When the crash comes, the public is considerably surprised; so are the creditors and the banks, and the employees of the firm. But often the most astounded people in the whole community are the partners themselves. — *Canadian Trade Review*

## BE POLITE.

The writer recently read a letter written by a delinquent debtor to the parties he owed, in which he said he could not pay now, would pay as soon as he could, and the debt would surely be paid if he had to sell his grave clothes. Doubtless he thought that a most brilliant thing to say, and that his creditors would immediately put him down as a great man, but they didn't. On the contrary, they concluded that a person who would write such stuff in a business letter would never pay until forced, and they immediately took steps to enforce payment.

In writing to debtors one should also be polite. Piercing threats couched in rough language are always resented, and besides it is an accepted saying that "barking dogs never bite." If you mean to sue a debtor unless he settles up prior to a certain date, or give a satisfactory explanation for failure to do so, it is not impolite to tell him so if the language used is mild and firm. If you do not mean it, better not say it. If a debtor is insolvent, a threat to sue is a waste of time, and in nine cases out of ten prompts the debtor to delay payment longer than he would had you not threatened him with the law.

As a rule there is absolutely no excuse for the use of rough, vulgar or profane language in letter writing, and it always redounds to the discredit of the writer, morally, if he be rich; morally and financially if he be poor.—*Ec.*

## BANK CLERKS' TEMPTATIONS.

An Eastern exchange, speaking of the temptations to which bank clerks are very often subjected, says: "Perhaps in the sense of a stricter regard for the rights, property and vested interests of our fellowmen the world is on a higher plane now than when that old cynic Diogenes started to search through the market at noonday with a lighted lantern in his hand in order to find an honest man. An honest man is no longer such a 'rara avis,' and yet the profession in which, perhaps, above all others, honesty is the most necessary qualification seems to find it difficult to keep up the supply. The heading 'Another defaulting bank official' is so frequently seen in our newspapers that foreman of the news room might safely keep it 'standing.' Yet bank officers from education, breeding and standing in society might fairly be expected to be living exemplars of high toned honesty. The young man just from school or college, of respectable connections, and with a promising future before him might fairly be expected to have the moral fibre to resist temptations. If religion or morality has no hold upon him the knowledge that promotion is dependent upon earning the confidence of his superiors should be sufficient to keep him straight. There are, however, temptations peculiar to the profession. He is placed in a position where he is almost compelled to appear in fashionable attire. He must move in good society, and if he is not fortunate enough to have still the run of his father's house he must board at places where the highest rates are charged. To attempt to economize in such matters would actually expose him to suspicion. To live in a cheap neighborhood, to associate with persons of small means, to appear shabby or unfashionable would be fatal to further advancement and would make even his present position an uncertain one. And yet to keep up the measure of dignity forced upon him his employers allow him a pittance on which it is scarcely possible to exist. This is a point on which we imagine the higher officials are not sufficiently careful. They should know that on the starting salary generally given it is almost impossible for a young man, unless he has private means, to avoid debt, and the worry of debt is often the cause of the first step on the downward path. The defalcations are generally small at first and the amount is taken as a temporary loan with a full intention of replacing it out of his salary, which may be due in a few days. But in how few cases is the downward path ever retraced. One error leads to another. One robbing is used to cover up another, and so the course is run. The man may apparently be prosperous and advancing in his profession. It may be years before the crash comes, but come it does sooner or later. If more care were taken in the selection of aspirants for responsible positions and the pay were made proportionate to the responsibility, the world would be less often startled by the dishonesty of persons who up to the very day of the discovery have been looked upon as of the highest character."