

by a staff of absolutely devoted clerks—as the business dyspeptic often is, for some reason. This ex-salesman had tamed him in two visits, on the theory that there must be some decency about a man who held the love of his subordinates. The first lasted three minutes, and was made expressly to let the old chap "cuss" him. On going out he said, "It's too bad you're so all-fired cross this morning, Mr. Spleen." The second visit lasted much longer.

Going straight past the clerks, he got across the wide office as fast as his legs would carry him, and before the sour old face was raised laid a hand lightly on the old fellow's shoulder and said, "Mr. Spleen, it would put anybody in good humor to see you so cheerful this morning. I'll bet you're just punishing the work." That day he stayed two hours, sold a heavy bill of goods, and made a dyspeptic but steadfast friend.

Well! And now this was the sort of thing he had to meet from the other side of the bargain. These salesmen had information he needed. They could do him many a good turn if he made them friends. Yet he dare not let them impose their own points of view or control him by personality. That way lay shortsighted buying. The first four or five men who came in the morning he could beat at the personality game. But then he would be tired and easy picking for twenty-five others.

THE REFORMED SALESMAN AND HIS METHODS.

His office was arranged in an ingenious way: A solitary chair stood some distance from his desk, with light from the windows falling full on anybody who sat in it. There were no other seats in the room. His desk was so placed that a visitor found it awkward to reach over and shake hands on coming in, and easy to walk over and sit in this chair.

A salesman entered, took the chair, and began his talk. The buyer was always cordial. As the salesman gauged his man and warmed up to his argument he invariably tried to move that chair nearer the desk. But it never moved an inch, because it was fastened to the floor. The buyer's own chair was on a swivel, and, perhaps, as the salesman talked, he turned and looked absently out the window. This arrangement made the office not unlike a court, where the prisoner comes with his cooked-up story, and finds himself in strange surroundings. Before him a keen judge. Behind, an officer who nudges him in the ribs and asks, "Why don't you answer his Honor?" Two questions and the prearranged story is driven out of his mind, and he is thrown directly on to the facts.

This was only the visible stage machinery, however.

A purchasing agent who has never sold goods himself will frequently act entirely on the defensive in buying, taking the side of the house and meeting the seller point by point. But this ex-salesman usually took the seller's side, and made a dummy opponent of his house.

A new device being brought to attention, he listened to the argument, made inquiries, and asked that a sample be left for a few days. When the salesman returned he said:

"We've looked into this thing. Personally, I am favorable to it. The idea is excellent and new. In fact, too new. You know a board of directors is difficult to persuade. Our directors are broad-minded men. But they fall into errors of judgment. They have in this case. I am sorry to say we are not in accord about your device. Yet my own confidence is so great that I am willing to stretch a point if you help me. If we install this device, you see, I take the risk. I must have your co-operation in every way. Will you give it?"

The answer was obviously affirmative. Then, with the common enemy of a hostile board of directors to

overcome, the prices, discounts, terms could often be made exceedingly attractive.

Another device common among purchasing agents is that of playing poverty. No matter how many millions a corporation may have, its purchasing agent can always be poor. Half a million dollars passes through his hands yearly. But he explains that it comes in quarterly appropriations. He is just squeezing through the second month on three dollars and sixty-eight cents. Your proposition attracts him, but he hasn't any of his appropriation left. And so the seller is led to make his proposals exceptionally tempting on the chance that the buyer will be able to borrow a little money of his wife.

In business generally there are hundreds of houses that never shade their established prices in any way. No skill or trickery in buying can bring them down a penny. Where it is obviously impracticable to beat prices down, however, the purchaser may be very successful in beating them up. For the same price he may secure three-X quality instead of ordinary grades; or, to the goods themselves may be added valuable service.

The sales-manager of a specialty house went out on the road, visiting his salesmen. Every man he talked with had the same grievance. Goods sometimes came back to the retail merchant for repairs, and the latter then shipped them to the factory. Everything was sold with the guarantee to dealer and consumer that repairs would be made free and defective goods replaced. On paper this guarantee was a strong selling argument. But in actuality the goods went back to the factory, were kept weeks, and sometimes lost. Correspondence was often ignored. Everybody hated the repair department.

At the factory it had been thought that this repair department was a minor detail that ran itself. Nobody had paid much attention to it. The sales-manager hurried back and investigated. He found the clerks copying each complaint in long-hand five or six times, and correspondence being thrown into a big box. The harder a complainant kicked, and the oftener he wrote, the less inclination there would be to hunt through that box, get all the papers, and take the case up systematically.

BIG BUYING AND LITTLE BUYING.

That department must be reorganized, of course. The sales-manager called in typewriter men, patent sales-slip men. These people were working every day on just such problems, and had experience covering the whole range of business.

"We will buy goods of you only on condition that you devise a system for that department," he said. Within a few days the salesmen came back with systems all drafted out. One man brought an entry form on which a single boy could write particulars of each complaint received, making five carbon copies for people who subsequently handled it. The typewriter salesman submitted another form whereby, at one writing, a complete record was made for the books and an address slip written for shipping back repaired goods.

Price and terms are by no means the chief consideration in buying. The service a seller will give under a continuous relation may be far more important than petty savings. The man who buys printed matter for a large Eastern house, for example, throws ninety per cent. of his patronage to one printer. On each contract, though, he obtains several competitive bids, so that average prices may be gauged. This one printer gets the business, and because he has a continuous relation with that buyer relieves him of much detail work—hunting up new materials, experimenting with various papers, inks. Ten