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& GENERAL STOREKEEPER

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SPECIAL TO OUR READERS.

As the design of THE CANADIAN GROCER is to benefit mutually all interested in the business, we would request all parties ordering goods or making purchases of any description from houses advertising with us to mention in their letter that such advertisement was noticed in THE CANADIAN GROCER.

The merchant who has good store help ought to congratulate himself, for in that he possesses a most powerful auxiliary for the doing of a successful business. The instances are numerous enough where men in trade have made money in spite of their own business incapacity, and because of the fidelity and capability of employes. There are a great many men to-day in the forefront of commerce who laid the foundations of their eminence in the conscientious discharge of their duty to others in whose service they were. We know of stores which do what may truly be termed a clerk-made business. There is no denying the fact that the part the clerk can play in building up an enduring trade for his employer is a very large one. It is according to the extent to which a clerk is instrumental in enlarging or confirming the scope of the business his employer does, that his rating as a good, indifferent or bad shop assistant should be. By that test he should stand or fall.

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But in these times the maximum benefit is rarely got out of clerk service. There is less to assist the enthusiasm and loyalty of clerks in their employers' interests, to develop their

business powers or to select the fittest men for the calling. Undoubtedly there is to-day behind the counters of Canadian stores a large number of shop salesmen who are the peers of the very best, but these are the exceptions. There is another but much larger number of clerks who are not the fully equipped men they should be, and not by any means the men they would have been were they employed in similar positions some years ago or in old country stores. There is too little in life behind the counter to induce the best raw material to take to it on a very large scale nowadays. There are young men now engaged as street car drivers who left the ranks of salesmen to accept that position. And they were not driven out by better men. Their places were taken by worse men, if willingness to accept lower pay be taken as an acknowledgment of inferiority. The men who left the stores to become street car drivers did so because they could make more money as street car drivers. They are good drivers as they would have been good clerks.

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The shop salesman is becoming, like many another of the best adjuncts of sound business, a sacrifice to the spirit of competition by which trade is possessed. Profits are little more than nominal, adulterated and inferior goods are eagerly taken up, every device whereby prices can be let down is studied. Business is increased, the labor of the shop assistant increases in direct proportion, while his rate of pay declines from the standard of sounder times accordingly. Small pay cannot purchase a high quality of service. Boys and girls consequently have to be taken to fill places that men experienced in business and skilled in human nature ought to occupy. And when these boys become men, when they ought to be ready trained shop hands, they usually betake themselves to some other occupation where their service will find better pay.

Manual labor, though less, attractive is usually more remunerative, and several take to it in preference to salesmanship.

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The clerk is not only underpaid, but he is not nowadays trained in so healthy a school as he was years ago. His calling is a less dignified one, and for the reason that the whole bent of his training is to perfect him in the one art of persuading customers to believe in the incomparable cheapness of his prices. He has to make prices appear lower than those of others, rather than to know how to gain a customer's confidence and attach trade for future years. This does not tend to bring out his best parts as a business man any more than the meagre pay he receives tends to bring the best men into the work. The solid, personal qualities and business practices that are guarantees of genuineness and fair-dealing are the valuable elements in a clerk, and the ones it pays to give a good salary to keep. Brains, integrity, experience, tact and industry have still a market, even if the salesroom does not afford it, and to that market the best material will take itself. There are merchants who pay good salaries, and their wisdom is approved by its results.

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The retail grocers cry out against the wholesale grocers that the latter are so hedging themselves round that retailers have no chance to make their way into wholesale circles. The clerks have at least equal reason for exclaiming against the retailers that the latter are placing all the obstacles they can in the way of the clerks becoming master-traders. And if the ranks of the master-traders are not to be recruited from the ranks of the clerks, whence are they to be recruited? Are the farms and workshops to be the training schools of the merchants who are to succeed our present storekeepers? One reason why trade has got into its present unsatisfactory state is