

WHAT IS A COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER?

At the annual session of the Ohio Retail Grocers' Association, held at Columbus, O., Mr. John C. Fennmore, of Columbus, Supreme Councillor, U. C. T. of A., being then present, in response to a demand made on him by the assemblage to answer the question displayed above, delivered the following pithy, witty, comprehensive speech, which fortunately we are able to present to our readers in its entirety. Mr. Fennmore said: The spectacle about to be presented to you is that of a young man, apparently in his right mind and of mature age, attempting to elucidate the proposition, "What is a Commercial Traveller?" to an audience composed of several hundred merchants. A glance at your deep furrowed brows, coupled with a knowledge upon the part of the speaker that those lines of anguish have been placed there by the subject of his sketch, a realization of the fact that the rapidly whitening locks, adorning a goodly number of your heads, are the direct result of his insidious attacks upon you, warns me that my position is full of peril, and makes the difficulties of my task appear to be almost insurmountable. Were I to tell you the whole truth, this audience would rise as one man to rend me, if I prevaricate, the representatives of the press are in waiting to convey the intelligence to the two hundred thousand members of my profession, and annihilation will be my doom. The common criticism upon one who conveys any commodity to a point where there is already a vast over production is, that "he is carrying coals to Newcastle," but that would be insipid in this instance. One who would attempt to furnish a description of a "drummer" to an audience of retail grocers would more closely resemble an individual who, having drawn the capital prize in the Louisiana lottery, proceeds to organize himself into a syndicate for the purpose of piping natural gas into the city of Findley. Ex Vice-President Colfax was, upon a certain occasion, discussing the subject of future punishment with Dr. Foster, a noted divine of the Universal faith. The doctor was insisting that hell was a myth. To this Mr. Colfax replied with a great deal of earnestness: "There must be a hell, Doctor! It is a military necessity." It is along this line of argument and thought, gentlemen, that I shall attempt to lead you up to a point where you will at least sympathize with the exhortation, "bear these light afflictions for a season," when we apply it to commercial travellers. The leading forces employed in the distribution and interchange of merchandise may be classified under three heads, namely: the manufacturer or jobber, the retail merchant, and the travelling salesman. The duties of each of these are very different from the others, but the interests of all are identical. If the trinity act concertedly upon this hypo-

thesis, the natural result will be pleasant as well as profitable commercial intercourse between them. If the sordidity of temperament or dyspepsia of either of them blind that one to this principle of mutuality, the particular one afore-mentioned will, in the due course of events, find that his meanness is costing him money, and making his own, as well as the lives of the other two, a burden, and later on, when he attempts to realize upon the clause of the unwritten law of commercial equity, the other two will shake their heads and say to him with no uncertain accent: "You make me tired." There is a community of interests. The manufacturer or jobber and the retailer might be termed a pair of Siamese twins, and the travelling man the ligament which unites them. The description of the twins has been delegated to more competent hands; my mission is to diagnose the ligament. The duties of the salesman are ministerial, executive and clerical. He is envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to about one million of merchants in the United States. The simple fact of his being a diplomat, possessing ability outranking that of Blaine or Bayard will not suffice. It is only expected of the first of these gentlemen that he will be a republican, and of the second, a democrat; our friend is expected to be both of these, and a prohibitionist as well. When loaded with the requisite complement of politics, he has upon his devoted shoulders the combined weight carried by McKinley, of Ohio, Mills of Texas, and Sam Small, of Georgia, through the last campaign. When requested to do so by a customer, he is expected to produce from some one of his multitudinous pockets the most approved recipe for either or all of the epidemics or contagious maladies which afflict humanity, while in the deep recesses of his memory must be stored all of the latest jokes and stories extant. In the executive branch of his anatomy, must be garnered an ability to make black look white, the power to "lead the blind by ways they know not, to make dark places light, and crooked paths straight before them," and to explain away the most exasperating mistakes that are sometimes made at the other end of the line. He must be able to show you that eighty cents cartage upon a single barrel of sugar was not a covert attempt upon the part of his house to sell you a dray, and leave the proprietorship of the same vested in the party of the first part, but a philanthropic endeavour to assist you in placing an unfortunate individual whom the Good Lord had originally intended for a congressman, but whom the unrelenting hand of misfortune had wrested from his high estate, down to driving a cart, back again up to the mountain of affluence. He must have a heart of marble and a will of steel, that he may grapple with an incorrigible merchant, and like Jacob of old, holding

him fast, cry, "I will not let thee go, unless an order thou bestow." When he accomplishes his purpose, and secures your order, he sends it in to the house, in due time you receive an invoice accompanied by a letter, which informs you that the goods you did not want, but bought to fill out the order, have been shipped, and that the ones you were out of had been cancelled. You fire a letter back at them, using nitro-glycerine for ink. They call the ligament into the office, read your letter to him, and say, "You write to him, William, he will believe you." Then the ligament repairs to the "swearing-room," composes his nerves, and proceeds to inform you, that the house wanted to ship the goods in the first place, but the bookkeeper wouldn't let them. This last act of ignominy which has been heaped upon him is labelled "clerical." Oh, my brethren! when the imperceptible veil which hides time from eternity shall have been drawn asunder, and all those who have been colonized upon the other side shall stand in bold relief before us; when the first great martyr, St. Stephen, shall appear surrounded by an innumerable company of victimized bookkeepers, let us hope, that as the commercial travellers march by in solid phalanx, the words wasted to our ears may not be from the lips of these, chanting in the language of Bill Nye's latest poem, "Where do you go from here?" but rather may there be carriages awaiting us at the station, with swift steeds, shod with pity for our many earthly qualities; and as the clatter of their hoofs resound upon the streets

WEBSTER

THE BEST INVESTMENT
for the Family, School, or Professional Library.



Best of many other valuable features, it comprises

A Dictionary of the Language
containing 118,000 Words and 3000 Engravings.

A Dictionary of Biography
giving facts about nearly 10,000 Noted Persons.

A Dictionary of Geography
locating and briefly describing 25,000 Places.

A Dictionary of Fiction
found only in Webster's Unabridged.

All in One Book.
30,000 more Words and nearly 3000 more Illustrations than any other American Dictionary.

WEBSTER IS THE STANDARD

Authority in the Gov't Printing Office, and with the U. S. Supreme Court. It is recommended by the State Sup'ts of Schools of 36 States, and by leading College Presidents of the U. S. and Canada.

The London Times says: It is the best Dictionary of the English language.

The Toronto Globe says: Its place is in the very highest rank.

The Toronto Week says: It is the one final authority safely to be relied on.

The Montreal Herald says: Its use is becoming universal in Canada.

The Canada Educational Monthly says: No teacher can afford to be without it.

The New York Tribune says: It is recognized as the most useful existing "word-book" of the English language all over the world.

Sold by all Booksellers. Pamphlet free.
G. & C. MERIAM & CO., Publishers.
Springfield, Mass., U. S. A.