

### THE SALESMAN AND PROFITS.

Profits are not solely dependent upon the state of competition, the quality of the goods and the means or liberality of consumers. There is another element that enters into the result. It is the resourcefulness of the salesman. An able salesman will sell goods to better advantage than an ordinary salesman will. The test of salesmanship is not the amount of the sales but the profit on them. A brilliant salesman is not necessarily a good one, judged by this standard. The difficulty is not so much to sell goods as to make some money on them. A store can hold goods, a tasteful industrious clerk can display them to good advantage, the goods can help to sell themselves, but it takes a man of consummate ability to save the margin intact.

The training of salesmen is carried on in the right school, and that is behind the counter. But it could be very generally brought to higher perfection of result than it reaches. The stock difficulties should be theorized as well as acted upon. Much in the same way as imaginary legal questions are argued out formally by law students during their professional course, so should imaginary problems be discussed between principal and learner. Here is a grade of coffee, for example, that cannot be sold under 40c.; there is an abundance of lower, priced coffee in the stocks of competitors; what plea should the seller work upon to get the full price in these circumstances from So-and-So, a well-known enemy of profits? Such a question might be forced on the clerk by the necessities of practical business, and it is well that the salesman should have some defence of his profits to fall back upon. He must know that there is no chickory in this coffee, that it is Java or Mocha or a mixture of both, and not a South or Central American coffee. He must know something of the differences between the two classes of coffee, must be able to talk about mild and strong coffees, must know something of the market circumstances prevailing at the moment, and be able generally to impress his customer with the fulness and superiority of his knowledge. That sort of problem should be often conned. Not only does the discussion of questions like this furnish both the novice and veteran with ready answers for particular cases, but exercises them in the habit of equipping themselves to answer haggling customers. To-day the haggling customer is usually met by a concession. Prices are commonly quoted for shading, the belief being that a debateable margin in addition to a fair profit is a good thing, as it enables the salesman to make a seeming sacrifice if the customer happens to be one of the persistent kind.

It is almost as difficult to try to do business with a depleted stock as with an exhausted reserve of pleas to obtain full prices. Often a line of stock will be found lying unsold in one store while the competing store

will be found cleaned out of that description of goods. The demand is not lacking in such cases or the goods would be immobile in both stores. The price may check business in one place and may not be allowed to do so in the other, but as often as not the price could be obtained if the salesman was as artful in holding on to the price and letting go the goods as the customer is in the opposite course. The capacity of the demand is sometimes capable of more than the capacity of the salesman's resources. The auctioneer has to be a nimble-witted man. If he were not, if he relied on no other art but that of steady plodding in asking bids, he would soon run his business into the ground. The salesman at the counter must be something more than an automaton. He must be full of expedients to protect his profits and yet push sales. He must know something of varieties in every line of stock, something of markets, and be possessed of the latest information available. If he reads his trade paper diligently he will keep his mind open to the progress of events, and will have a constantly furnished memory to draw from in presenting the case for the profit he is expected to get on everything that it is possible to make a profit on.

A grocer one morning walked into a branch store that a manager was running for him in a suburb, and observing a lot of feed baskets that had been put in stock four or five weeks before, demanded why more of them were not sold before this. The reply was that the price was too high. "Well," said he, "I'll send Jack up a day or two, and we'll see if he can't thin them out." This instance shows what store is placed by experienced men on salesmanship that sells but does not sacrifice.

### "NEXT!"

What principle of precedence should the shopkeeper observe in waiting upon his customers? Rank or beauty, age or sex, or simply order of arrival? This is a question which a man's own natural diplomacy, in the presence of the actual facts of each particular case, must provide him with an answer for. A generalized answer, with ample room for the play of exceptions, can be devised for any question, and such an answer to the question asked above would be, Wait on people in the order of their arrival. This is the even-handed way; it levels down all conditions of means, standing, influence, disposition, etc., and is unobjectionable from a purely moral standpoint. But the purely moral standpoint is not the one from which the customers usually look at the matter. The purely selfish standpoint is the popular one. This fact the trader must become familiar with for his own advantage, and he must make some allowance for it in the application of the general rule quoted above.

Potent selfishness is the law which must determine what exceptions are to be made to the general rule.

Tact, discrimination, adroitness, are called for very often, especially in cities, when the store is crowded with all sorts and conditions of men, women and children. The one who is in the greatest hurry feels most obliged by the first care, while the one who has most time to spare is least offended, unless dignity be touched, by the longest waiting. Where gallantry or respect for age seems to have paramount claims over strict adherence to order of arrival, or to the necessities of haste, it is no doubt very often good policy to defer to those claims. This is where nice judgment and subtle acquaintance with human nature are brought into play. It is one of the things learned by the shopkeeper to know how to give the minimum of offence and the maximum of self-satisfaction. A polite word of apology to any one who has been kept waiting ought not to be forgotten. The sourest people like that little deference to their selfishness. A salesman ought to feel that he is born to please. Unswerving adherence to the barber's rule of priority of arrival is right but not politic in all cases. If it gives less offence to deviate from it, the deviation ought to be made. There is one thing though: the man that ignores the rule "First come, first served," will need to know how to apply balm to wounded feelings often, or he will estrange trade. Nothing could be more offensive, nothing more deserving of condemnation than a toadyish spirit in a shopkeeper. Above all things, he must make no display of that. To pass over a poorer customer who stood at his or her place next in order of arrival and ostentatiously evince a readiness to wait on a later and greater person first is unmannerly. When discrimination has to be made unjustly as a matter of policy, it should be done with as much grace as possible.

### ADVERTISING PRECEPTS.

It is better to give your money to an orphan's home than to invest it in a poor advertisement.

You must use your brains if you are going to have your advertisement read. Do not be slangy nor coarse, but try to have the ideas attractive and the whole article readable.

It pays to have your advertisement in a good place in your local paper, even if the cost is twice as great. Select a space and always use that space, and people will know where to find your advertisement, just as they know where to find your store. You wouldn't move it once a week, would you?

Select the best paper. That will be a hard task, but try to make sure that the medium you use in talking to your customers is the one that they have most respect for, the one that they like best to read. The paper with the largest circulation is no