

HINTS TO RETAILERS.

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS REGARDING THE
HOLIDAY TRADE AND STORE MANAGEMENT.

By a Head Clerk.

THE season for Christmas trade is at hand, December being a month when every man, woman and child are out looking for presents, and most of them, especially women and children, visit nearly all the stores in their city or town before purchasing. The one who uses his customers well and keeps the best goods is the one who reaps the reward during the busy holiday season and for months afterwards, when Christmas rushes are over and forgotten.

There are many things to be done before the rush comes, and which must be done quickly, for the time is short.

How are you going to display all the beautiful novelties you have? What kind of an impression is the interior of your store going to have upon the shoppers? Will it be suggestive of Merry Christmas, or present the same old, ordinary appearance, as if you had not got in any new stock?

Look back upon the years you have been in business and see what changes have taken place, or what you have seen happen in other stores, and try to make some improvement upon them, so that people cannot say that you are going behind the times instead of going forward. You know that the world over is making vast strides in decorating, and if you are to be counted as an up-to-date merchant, you must do the same.

Here is a department in which "Christmas goods" are sold. It looks lovely. Nothing has been spared to bring it to the point. There are lots of pretty things. The clerks are busy and happy looking. But right across the passage nothing has been done. "Why?" It is a staple goods department. The merchant thought it was no use in bothering with it. Shoppers do not want staples. They are looking for novelties, and he reasoned that it was of no use to spend any of his valuable time in studying out some plan for decorating that department. This is where he has made a great mistake. Although people do not want very much from this department, if it were in keeping with other parts of the store it would not only give the place a brighter appearance, but it would draw customers at least to inspect the goods, and in many cases it would result in sales. Then you must remember that a great many people care more about something that is useful for presents than they do for ornaments.

Have everything properly marked and ticketed and see that all stock, forward and reserve, is kept in such good order that you could put your hand on any one thing in the dark. It saves time and prevents mistakes. Do not imagine that your regular clerks know the price of every article and where to find it, that they can keep an eye on the extra help at all times and assist them on every occasion. You want your experienced salespeople to help you run the business, not to wait on new and possibly inexperienced clerks.

Now is the time to make your price card and window signs. You know pretty well what you are going to display and which

lines you intend as leaders. You can have your advertisements more than half prepared beforehand. No man can write an ad. that is worth reading if his mind is distracted by a thousand and one other things.

Have as much aisle and counter room as possible during the holiday rush. This does not mean to tear down part of your store and rebuild it; it means place the busy departments judiciously through the store. Do not have a handkerchief counter on one side of the aisle and a fancy goods department or some attractive holiday department directly opposite. Do not have your busy departments bunched at one end of the store and quiet ones at another. It is a sure way to take from them whatever trade they might get, and unnecessarily inconvenience the shopper who wants to buy your Christmas goods.

Do not crowd the passages with bargain tables unless you have loads of room. Better to remove them altogether from the more crowded sections and put them in other parts where they will really do more good.

Do not put your most attractive line at the entrance of your store and block your whole place. The better place for it would be nearer the centre. Do not be afraid that it will be overlooked. People hunting for Christmas goods do not forget to take in your whole store. In fact, they look anywhere and everywhere.

It is well not to keep customers waiting for change or for their parcel to be tied up. Have competent cashiers and parcel wrappers, and have enough of them so that they can handle it without trouble. There is nothing that customers dread more than to have to wait for their change or bundle, and there is nothing which an up-to-date merchant likes more to boast about than that his buyers do not have to wait, or are not inconvenienced in any way. The store is for their pleasure.

Be very strict in regard to mistakes which at this busy season are so liable to happen. Insist that each clerk, after writing down the article, amount purchased and address, read it over to the buyer. If this be strictly observed, there need not be any reason for making mistakes.

If another merchant runs you down in his advertisement, and makes all sorts of untrue statements about you, do not pay any attention to him. You could not have a better advertisement. People know your goods and they know whether he is telling the truth or not. At any rate, it will be the means of bringing them to your store to inspect the goods out of curiosity, if nothing else.

The Alaska Feather & Down Co. are of the opinion that nothing could be nicer for a Christmas present than a silk or satin covered down quilt, and are showing some pretty ideas in this line.

W. R. Brock & Co. report a special purchase of towels in hucks and damask. These are goods made for a very large concern in Chicago which were not ready until after the Dingley bill came into force and were thus barred out of the States. W. R. Brock & Co. were accordingly able to buy them at a great reduction. They will have them in stock during this month and give their customers the advantages of the reduction in price.