

EXPERIENCES OF "A COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER."

BY "ONE OF THEM."

MOUNT FOREST, March 28.

"The road is a wonderful leveller. Those men in the house who only take occasional trips "just to see the country" and who have not adopted travelling as a profession, are made to feel this acutely. No matter with what importance their position at home may be invested, whether they be "boss," or manager, or buyer, all such distinctions must be waived on the road. Their self-sufficiency receives a sad blow when they find that hotel-men only recognize them as a new hand, that customers are disposed to look coldly upon them as a poor substitute for the usual traveller, whom they have come to identify with the house, and that of all they meet, no one is at all oppressed with a sense of their importance. A partner in a firm takes, for the nonce, the beat his traveller has tramped for years. That traveller has made it his business to become regarded as an ephemeral citizen of every place he visits; like a change in the moon, or fair-day, people know just when to expect him. When he enters a store, ten chances to one he is saluted with "Hello! here's A and B's man again," and when a stranger enters the store and announces that he is A and B's man" a shade of disappointment flits over the face of the merchant, and his first enquiry is "Why, where's So-and-so? why isn't he round?" Then, very often, he launches into a fulsome eulogy on the salesman-like qualities of "So-and-so." Ah! he will say, "smart fellow Jack—A and B will never get a man that'll sell the goods in this town he did" all of which is neither flattering nor pleasing to Jack's successor, especially when he finds himself assailed with like enquiries at every turn. The reflection that Jack works for his money, which might under other circumstances, have been consoling, becomes a galling one. The Americanism "Jack's as good as his master," is bad enough, but Jack being regarded as better than his master is too much. The trip over he is glad to take refuge in his warehouse, where he is "monarch of all he surveys," and sends Jack on his way rejoicing.

Sometimes, though the "boss" has his revenge; in his travels, if his traveller who preceded him has been a fast youth strange revelations are made to him of the doings of the gay Lothario. Queer stories of his amours and of the midnight revels he has been a party to are added to and improved upon for the special delectation of the "boss"; stories, which had he never taken the road, would never have reached him, nor gone beyond the choice circle of a few cronies who participated, and a few outsiders whose ears are always open for male gossips. But unfortunately it happens that the "boss" is just as prone to fall from grace as his traveller, and often he is anything but an unwilling party to those orgies in which his traveller played the "heavy man." So, when he returns home he preserves a discreet silence as to the doings of this man "on the road," as it is not likely he would have ever become aware of those doings had he not sought the society in which they were perpetrated. But, dear me! how I have forgotten myself—this paper was to have been devoted to an analysis (good word, that) of customers, and I haven't said a word about them since I started. Well, as to-morrow is Sunday, I expect the Religious Customer will be in order. Do any of my readers know the "Religious Customer?" But it is not right nor Christian-like to apply such a term as "religious" to a man who is worthy only of a "genuine contempt," so I will amend it and dub my sanctimonious friend the Hypocritical Customer

"Who, binding up his Bible with his ledger,
Blends Gospel texts with trading Gammou;
A Blackleg Saint, a Spiritual Hedger,
Who backs his rigid Sabbath, so to speak,
Against the wicked remnant of the week."

Poor Tom Hood's bitter words are peculiarly applicable to this self-constituted saint. This is the man who won't sell playing-cards, boasting with unctuous mouthings that "he doesn't know one card from another," and who delights in calling them "the devil's picture book." Yet this same univeller frequently makes his living, or the better part of it, by selling liquor, and with a consistency worthy of such a career will consent to eke his miserable dole out of some poor wretch whose insatiable craving for drink has long ago stifled the cries of the miserable, starving brood who depend on him for subsistence. The "Religious Customer," is always in a doleful mood, the world, to him, is purgatory, at least he wishes others to believe so; no smiles, no laughter no jollity for him; he delights in "in dust and ashes" similes and quotes the most dismal extracts from the Old Testament to the "worldly commercial" who tries to sell him goods. While you are standing at his counter a wan and wretched little beggar girl comes in craving for money or bread; more brutal than they who gave the stone for bread, he tells her to "clear out, or he'll send for a policeman," and the poor haggard little wretch runs away in terror. The next moment, he is all scripture and dooms-day again, and like a male "Mrs Jellyby" is soliciting your subscription for the benighted heathens in Manitoba, the Canadian Booriooboola-Gha. Such is the Customer who rides to death his hobby of a pretence of Religion. God grant that such men are not the earthly St. Peters who hold the key to Heaven, in such case, small chance for us who err, and know we err. But from a worldly point of view, let me say to my brethren on the road, beware of these wolves in sheep's clothing! I have in my mind's eye, a man who lives in a town "not 100 miles from Toronto," who has compromised with, or to use plainer English, defrauded, his creditors on three successive occasions, who has been held up by the leading paper of the town in which he lives for scorn "to point its slow and moving finger at," and yet—who had the hardihood to appear on a public platform recently, in company with hoary-headed and I hope, sincere clergymen, and there with a cheek and presumption rarely equalled, and with what would to a stranger appear ardent fervour in the good cause, advocate a prohibitory liquor law! To put it in a comical light.—Not only cheat the man he owes one thousand dollars to out of five hundred, but tell him also, with charming effrontery, that no matter how much he likes his glass of

beer or sherry, he, his swindler, will not allow him to drink it. But, as a refreshing antidote to the "Religious" or rather "Hypocritical Customer," us, travellers, fall in with the "Genuine Customer" who is willing to give

"A liberal acceptance to a damn,"

especially if the expletive be applied to his insincere neighbor, whom he abominates. The "Genuine Customer" is partial to Commercials as a body, but gives the cold shoulder to those of them who "put on airs." He may not please you on a first acquaintance, but that is because he has not been favourably impressed with you, for he is very sensitive to first impressions. Often his dislike to what he calls "siry" Commercials will mislead him, and make him ruthlessly snub some young fellow who never dreams of ostentation, but who has an unfortunate little crotchet that our sham-hating friend construes into an affectation. Should he take a liking to you, you will rarely meet a stauncher friend; it will take a good deal to alter his regard for you, a regard that a chance rupture he may have with your house never changes. In this regard, a traveller's position is peculiar; his very friendships, although none the less genuine, are a source of profit to the house he travels for. With him, as with a politician it pays to be sociable. But to return to our genuine friend. Many such I know, and it is like an oasis in the desert to drop in upon one of them after you have been drudging in a neighboring town all day among a lot of stiff-necked cold-blooded, "heaven-is-my-home" traders. If he is a grocer, he will have a liquor cellar, and your welcome appearance will in all probability be the excuse for an adjournment to the lower regions—I fear my readers have found out that I am not a "liquor crusader."—I have noticed on these occasions of the dispensing of underground refreshment, the merchant and you are rarely alone, some thirsty soul is sure to be occupying a prominent position on a store box, and by his yearning glance toward the trap-door, shows that "he don't mind if he does." Then, gone below, over our cups, the compliments of the season are exchanged—"Well, Tom, how has the world been using you?—help yourself—you're looking pretty well," to which Tom responds "Oh! yes, so-so—good whiskey that, John—whose is it?"—"Why, mine!" says John. "No, no, but whose make is it?"—"Oh! I see; it's Chippawa whiskey bought before Cartwright because Finance Minister, and hasn't been watered." But the best of friends must part, so we will drop into the store of Mr. Glum, the Dismal Customer. Mr. Glum is a misanthrope, and a bit of a philosopher, although his philosophy is rather cramped. He hates a cheerful man, and is the last person you would think of slapping on the back and saluting with a hearty "Hello! how are you?" Few men have seen him smile, but those who have say his frown is just about as amiable. A young and guileless Commercial sprightly, and full of animal spirits, enters his store, and with a confidence born of his inexperience, rashly attempts to break the ice of Mr. Glum's nature. If he succeeds he succeeds only to melt it into cold water that is ruthlessly dashed on his young and illusory hopes, and the hapless youth leaves the shop and Mr. Glum's presence, feeling like a convicted felon. If times are dull, Mr. Glum's says "we haven't seen the worst of them yet," and if things are pretty brisk, he won't admit it. His jaundiced eye prevents him seeing the bright side of things, and if it is shown to him, he resolutely turns from it. He has resolved that this earth is a dungeon, and he sustains that idea in his own person. Let us leave his gloomy presence and call on Mr. Happy, a fair specimen of the "Cheerful Customer." The morning is dull and cloudy, and Mr. Happy is pleased—"Ah! good morning, gentlemen, good morning,—going to rain, I see; just what's wanted, gentlemen, just what's wanted, fine thing for the crops." Or mayhap it is a bitter cold morning in winter, and Mr. Happy is in ecstasies with the "brisk, bracing air," although you cower over the stove, and shiver as you hear the bitter North wind howling round the building. It is doubtful if Mr. Happy is always sincere in his profession of perfect contentment; it is his role, and he acts it well. I don't like him; if I am out of sorts, he exasperates me. Don't go to him for sympathy, for his sympathy consists in showing you how ungrateful you are, and how you are so much better off than Mr. So-and-so—this Mr. So-and-so being an exceptionally unfortunate individual. Mr. Happy's business is in a chronic state of prosperity, but when it comes to a question of "do you want any goods?" he is fertile in excuses. You're either too early or too late, or "everybody has been here before you," and his excuse is so glib, and he seems so pleased with himself as he makes it, that you feel more than half-inclined to "give him a bit of your mind." But this don't pay, so if you are wise, your discretion compels you to hold your tongue.

A most troublesome gentleman is the "Deaf Customer;" in addition to his infirmity, which is almost as annoying to others as it is to himself, he is generally old and crabbed. His perverseness often leads him to pretend to be far deaf than he actually is, and you bellow at him till your voice grows hoarse, and your breath comes short. By the time you think you have got him to understand what your business is, there is a crowd of gaping children flattening their noses against the store window. Then when you have utterly ruined your voice, and about deafened yourself, he will snappishly tell you "he doesn't want anything." A curious feature of calling on the deaf customer develops itself when you leave his store and call on his neighbour. You walk up to the man, put your hands on his counter, lean over and shout in his ear in stentorian tones, "Good day—I—r—present—Smith—White—and—Co—o—o—the o being delivered with such a climax of noise and startling emphasis, that the man jumps from you as if you had fired a pistol at his ear. If there are ladies in the store, their suppressed giggles, and when he finds voice, the man's indignant enquiry of "What d'ye mean, sir? What d'ye mean, you infernal idiot? Do you think I'm deaf?" recal you to your senses, and if ever a Commercial felt mean, you do, and if you are capable of blushing, blush you must.

Last and best, the Commercial sometimes has the pleasure of dealing with the Business Customer. Like angels, visits they are few and far between. I know, and so do most of my fellow Commercials, a Business Customer in Sarua. He is a thorough gentleman; any traveller, no matter what his claims or pretences, can depend upon a civil and patient hearing from him. He never insults a man, but he can exquisitely snub any who presume to try "cheek" with him, or who, deceived by his quiet, inobtrusive manner, imagine they can bully him. If he wants any goods he frankly tells you so, without any demur or equivocation. He makes an appointment to see you, and keeps that appointment to the minute, expecting you to do the same. Alas! that such men should be the exception in-

stead of the rule. It is a fact which speaks ill for the common sense of country merchants, that more than one-half of the orders taken by travellers are taken from men who have told them, in the first instance, plump and plain, that "they didn't want anything." Truly a nice comment on their knowledge of their business and their stock.

I spoke just now of "cheek." People are fond of talking about the "cheek" of travellers, and say that "cheek" is their stock-in-trade. They are wrong, no sensible traveller—nay nor do good traveller—will be guilty of a display of "cheek." He will have—he must have confidence, but confidence and "cheek" are widely different. A gentlemanly confidence is the outward expression of a manly and becoming self-respect, while "cheek" is but the result of a want of respect for others born of ignorance.

WAYFARRER.

FROM THE NEW DOMINION TO THE OLD DOMINION.

"Colum non animum, mutant, qui transmare currunt" said somebody, years and years ago, little thinking that an age would come where a man could close his eyes in sleep amidst the snows of the North, to be opened in a green and sunny country, without change of cars. Here I sit, in my window, looking out upon the State House and gardens (with its magnificent equestrian statue of Washington, surrounded by the fathers of the Great Republic and the emblems of peace, finance, mechanics, &c.), of perhaps one of the most celebrated of historical cities. Richmond (Va.) has a population of sixty thousand; it is solidly built of brick and stone and is the most beautiful and pleasant town I ever visited. But, "Reverons à nos moutons," Mr. Editor. Let's look for the sheep we left behind us.

Canada, the New Dominion, had up to the date of my departure enjoyed a delightful winter, clear days and sunny skies had succeeded each other for weeks, but the political horizon had been overcast by the pall of scandal, party strife had waged with malignant violence and the whole press had, for weeks, been up in arms struggling to decide a point, which may prove as important to the future history of Canada as the battle of Hastings was to the subsequent history of England. With a new and untried party in power, supported by an immense majority but without a policy, or rather, composed of men each of whom has a policy of his own, with British Columbia almost in rebellion and many ticklish points to be decided, we shall leave Canada, crossing one of its richest farming districts to reach a Railway station. The roomy, substantial houses, often of stone or brick, the capacious barns, fine orchards and well-fed cattle strike one as evidence of thrift and wealth, while the immense amount of traffic on the public highways betokens a country in every respect prosperous. Taking the Grand Trunk, one is astonished at the improvements upon it within the last few years. The cars are comfortable and glide smoothly over the track at a speed not exceeded by that of any American Railway I have yet tried. The conductors are civil and obliging, and the whole appearance of things suggests the dawn of prosperity. No institution has done more for Canada, and none, the more, deserves success. Prescott always reminds me of a tavern in a small village where the Temperance movement has become epidemic. It seems to look on with stolid indifference, regarding the return of the Golden Age of tipplers and tap rooms as a matter of absolute certainty. The town is infested with "Ticket Agents" (a peculiar breed of the "Ouran Outang" tribe not particularly described by Darwin). They are a piratical kind of animal, a sort of social parasite, living upon the credulity and childish trustfulness of the travelling public.

The typical "Tic" is usually a short man, but not the less airish and important on that account. He wears square-toed boots and a diamond brooch, pinned on his coat collar or shirt bosom. In addition to these features, he sports a heavy gold watch chain, chews tobacco and is altogether a very obliging man. He pronounces "New York Central" with the Yankeeiest of nasal twangs, and Grand Trunk, in an insinuating and hisping bass. He talks of the Company as we and generally manages to delude the inquiring traveller. Every station should post up notices with the following advice, "Cave canem" "Beware the Ticket Agent." The public would profit by it. While passing through a small village, we came suddenly to the conclusion that dinner would not be objectionable. Acting on the impulse of the moment, we pulled up at what had been an hotel. I say had been because I ushered two ladies into the drawingroom and proceeded to order dinner, when my feelings received a severe blow (not to speak of my stomach) by running foul of a tall girl dressed in blue, who, in the most flagrant manner, denounced me as an intruder on the sanctity of a private house. I was so greatly overcome by some of her remarks, that I at once determined in future to steer clear of tall girls and scrupulously avoid those in blue. As we neared the Railway station, we were besieged by some schoolboys for a ride. One of our party, who was reclining upon the lap of the person behind, uttered the magic word *Small-pox*. Had a thunder-bolt fallen in their midst a greater commotion could not have been induced. Terror was instantly depicted on every countenance and with one accord they fled in radiating directions from the practical joker.

Crossing to the "Burg" from Prescott, I took the morning train on the "Bome, Watertown and Ogdensburg Railway." At Sandy Creek I took the "Syracuse Northern" which taps the New York Central, by which line I reached Canandaigua about 6 30 P.M.

The city of Ogdensburg is a flourishing place, largely engaged in the grain and lumber trade. Near it, are some fine beds of iron ore. Whilst passing one of these beds, I was addressed in a peculiarly American voice thusly:

"Ben't you from the Burg?"

Laconically—"No."

"Ah! from Canada I guess?"

"Yes."

"How's stock over there?"

"Don't know."

"Why! Ben't you a cattle drover? How's live stock?"

I assured the party, that I know nothing of live stock or