

## OUR TRAVELERS.

FROM THE DRAPERS' RECORD.



**I**T MUST not be supposed for a moment that I have any objection to commercial travelers calling upon me; for, on the contrary, I number some of them among my best friends; and, even of those who only give me an occasional call, I can truthfully say that I invariably give them a courteous reception, even if I have no time to look at

their samples.

But there are travelers and travelers, some to the manner born, with an easy way of introducing themselves and their goods that rather makes you do business with them whether you will or whether you won't. And, again, there are others who, no matter what special lines they deal in, are handicapped by a mannerism which is repellant. There are travelers who are brimming over with common sense and tact, and who know to a nicety when to push the trade and when to just run in and give a shake of the hand and rush off again; and there are travelers who go blundering on without the slightest bit of tact or discretion, and are always pushing their goods at the most inopportune moment.

This last individual generally calls on a market day, and begins by saying that he is sorry for interrupting you when your shop is full of customers, but what with early closing days and market days, he finds a difficulty in dodging around so as to avoid them. He is profuse in his apologies, and eloquent on the advantages that will accrue to you if you will only leave your customers, and give him just five minutes to look through his samples. You, of course, feel very much inclined to tell him that he is only an ass to attempt to do business at such a time. But still, even then, he can't quite see that his presence is not required, and so long as you are civil to him he will go on "pushing the trade," and it is not until he sees a storm gathering that he will pack up his traps and be off.

It is necessary, of course, for travelers to push the trade, as, if they took "No" for an answer every time, they would do precious little business; but the best traveler is the one who can push in such a quiet way that his customer does not notice that there is any pressure being brought to bear upon him.

One of the best-known drapery travelers was a perfect demon for work. He would go without food for a long time, or just have a stand-up snack at a bar so that he could continue his business with the least possible interruption. When his day's work was done he would do his traveling at night and sleep in the train. By this means he did an extraordinary return, but he was one of the best-hated men on his ground, both by his customers and by his fellow travelers.

When he came into a shop he invariably brought in a couple of parcels with him, and, if the least encouragement was given, he very soon had half his samples lying about on the counters and floor.

"Bring in the barrow, Mr. ———," was a remark he heard often enough, but he was so thick-skinned that a little suggestion of that kind had no effect upon him. There was only one way of check-mating him, and that was by keeping out of his

way altogether; but, as he traveled for a good house, that was not always convenient.

Of quite an opposite character is the jocular traveler, generally a fine big chap with his heart on his sleeve. When a young fellow wants a berth it is to this kind of traveler he applies, and he goes through the form of asking all particulars, only to forget them ten minutes afterwards. But he has a good heart for all that. He comes in smiling and shakes hands all round, as if it was his greatest pleasure in life to see them all after an absence of about six weeks. Then he makes for the governor, and takes him aside and relates one of the latest commercial-room tales, spicy or otherwise, according to the taste of the customer. He has no samples now, but has just looked in to say that he is here, and will be ready for business at nine o'clock next morning. As he is friendly with the assistants, they take the trouble to look up all the orders they can for him, and when he departs he takes leave of them in the most affectionate manner.

A harmless individual is the "suggesting" traveler. You are contemplating some alterations in your premises (drapers generally have some project of this sort in their minds), and it is he who can put you up to a thing or two in that way. You must do this and not do that, and mind and not neglect the other; until you begin to think that you ought to commence pulling down forthwith. Meanwhile you are ordering away between whiles until by the time the suggestions are completed you are pretty deep in the traveler's order-book.

Everybody knows the talkative traveler—how he does talk, to be sure. What wonderful orders he has taken! He sold a big line of this to Smith, and Brown offered to take five hundred pieces of that if he would only give him an eighth off, and Jones's account had been closed simply because he had insulted the speaker. As I am not interested in what Smith, Brown & Co. buy, I feel somewhat annoyed with my talkative friend, and whilst he is jabbering on I am thinking of the most diplomatic way of getting rid of him without insulting him and getting my account closed.

There is not much to say of the masher traveler, as he is getting rarer every year, but at present he is still to the front. With collars of the latest cut, and a suit of the loudest pattern, he has an idea that he can book orders by a simple process of fascination. If he is traveling in ladies' outfitting he might possibly stand a chance of occasionally booking a line through being got up in a killing manner; but, as a rule, he is classified as a fop, whom sensible men avoid.

A rarer bird still is the lazy traveler, but even he is to be met with. He would never dream of taking a line or two in his hand when he goes in to see a customer. Oh, no! that would be quite out of the question. He must come in and have a long chat, and if he is told that there is nothing wanted, he will most likely say: "Well, I shall be here again in a month, perhaps you will find me a line then." It was one of this species that made an appointment in his stock-room with a customer, and when the customer got there he found the traveler fast asleep.

There is one class of traveler that almost every draper does his best to avoid, and that is the pompous traveler. What a tremendous man he is to be sure. He walks into the shop and shouts "How dey do!" in such a tone that customers turn round and wonder who the dickens has come now. He is such a mighty big man that one feels that it is a great condescension