THE "DRUMMER'S" FIRST DAY.

"When I started on the road, I imagined that the life of a drummer was one long-drawn sigh of transcendent bliss," says an old commercial traveller, "I imagined that the country merchants would all be glad to see me, would laugh heartily at my jokes and take my advice regarding what they should by. But the poetic dream soon vanished. I reached my first town in a pouring rain, and had to carry my heavy sample cases a quarter of a mile to the hotel. The first merchant I visited kept me waiting for an hour while he sold a plug of tobacco and a pint of whiskey to a negro, then sneaked out of the back door and went to dinner. The next one expressed an earnest desire to see every drummer hanged, and the third one pawed my samples over for an hour, informed me that all my best stories were told by Shem and Japhet in the ark, and that Ham grew black in the face trying to pitch them overboard. I got sour bread and fried catfish for dinner and slept that night on a corn-husk mattress from which the cobs had not been extracted. As I sat in my carpetless room on a chair with a game leg, and by the light of a smoky candle watched the bedbugs playing at bo-peep, I wanted to chuck my samples into the river, return to the city and drive a sprinkling cart."

THREE KINDS OF CUSTOMERS.

Every retail merchant knows that in trade there are three kinds of customers to deal with—first, the one who knows just what she wants; the second, the one who thinks she knows, and the third does not pretend to know. The first is generally posted on styles, fashions, weave, finish and colorings of the goods desired—in a word, knows what she wants and where to obtain it. This class is easily waited upon and gives the merchant and salesforce but little trouble. The second, who thinks she knows what wants and does not, is the one who is the most difficult to sell and please. She requires special attention, the exercise of patience and good judgment on the part of the salesforce. The good salesman understands this and brings the power of his knowledge of human nature to the aim to satisfy and to please. This is where the skill and tact of the good salesman comes in. The third is the unpretentious customer who prefers to depend upon the experience, taste, judgment and knowledge of the merchant and his salesforce rather than her own. She is frank enough to tell you that her knowledge of goods is limited and that she does not get out much. She depends upon you to be suited. This affords the salesman the opportunity to sell the late styles or unsalable stock in many instances. If he treats the customer fairly he tells what are good sellers, what are not selling well, what are the latest styles and the most serviceable goods. The cunning salesman often overreaches the mark by attempting to sell an unsalable article to such a customer. This is a mistake and one that will react against the merchant. Never deceive. If an article is out of style say so; tell the truth and you will sell more goods, and satisfy your customers as well as yourself.

THE SAFE LIMIT.

In a recent issue, the *Monetary Times*—doubtless moved thereto by the outcome of the building boom in Toronto—discussed "the safe limits of building," and, in the course of its article, drew the distinction between over production of movables and over speculation in houses and lands. In the case of excess, the former may be exported, though at a sacrifice, while houses and lands on which money has been borrowed, which does not earn its own interest, must remain where they are. During the discussion of its subject, it arrived at the following conclusions: "Money expended in improvements, if it only pays its own interest in the return it makes, leaves the enterprise sterile; when it yields more, the balance is profit; when it yields less, there is loss, and the loss shows that the enterprise is one that should not have been undertaken, since the net result of the operation was a loss of national capital." "Whenever there is an excess of buildings in a city or town, every additional building erected, if of a kind to compete with the old ones, depreciates the value of the whole, and lessens the security of loans made on the property."

Reference is made to the policy of the Dutch people of the olden days who, when there was a surplus of any article that was likely to decrease the value of the whole stock of that article, deliberately went to work and burnt the surplus, thereby producing artificial scarcity. This policy is simply given as illustrative of the principle at issue, but it is almost needless to say in our days would be not only impolitic but *contra bonos mores.* It is pointed out that the builder—who may be spoken of as speculative—who builds houses without regard to the demand, almost invariably does so on borrowed capital, the lender—the mortgagee—bearing the entire risk. The imprudence of capitalists in lending out their money in this way is thus one of the prime causes of the trouble, and with them lies—if not the solution of the difficulty—at least the preventive of its recurrence. They no doubt have been tempted to make their advances by the high rates to which in building and real estate booms interest attains, forgetful that surplus houses cannot be got rid of in foreign markets, while so long as they continue unoccupied they tend to lower the value of those which surround and adjoin.

Very often these real estate booms are brought about by the prospect of some real or fancied benefit that some undertaking is expected to bring about. Victoria has been influenced in this way in the past by what was expected in the "to be" and considerable amounts of money are at present being diverted into supposed railway towns that are now being boomed. Whether this activity is justified, remains to be seen; but those who are possessed of money will do well to see that they are not carried altogether off their heads and, indeed, off their feet, by what is actually a feverish anxiety to make money more rapidly than the ordinary methods and the pursuance of good principles warrant. We hope to see the railway referred to constructed at an early date and successfully operated, but there is no need for people to get crazy and invest foolishly and nordinately in a town which at its best cannot be built in a day nor can be called into existence as the one told of in the story of Aladdin, with whose name the burlesque playwriters associated an application that most expressively rhymed with the words "wonderful lamp."—*B. C. Commercial Journal.*