

WESTERN RETAILERS' EXPERIENCES.

THE METHODS FOUND BEST IN PUSHING SALES.

THE VALUE OF SPECIAL SALES—LOW PRICED LEADERS—WINDOW DRESSING A FACTOR—LOCAL ADVERTISING IN THE PRESS AND OTHERWISE.

DIFFERENT methods suit different places. What one merchant succeeds with may not give results to some other. But a comparison of ideas is always valuable. The Chicago Dry Goods Review has interviewed several western merchants and has recorded their experiences. One, the proprietor of a large general store in a thriving town, said:

"The city in which we are located is an ideal one in many respects for a good, hustling department store, and about three years ago we decided to run our business on that plan. There was at that time no department store in the place, and we still hold the field alone. The city has 3,000 inhabitants, and the business interests are well supported by railroad shops, a number of factories and a large surrounding agricultural territory. We also have a State institution that employs a large number of well paid people. Few towns are so favorably situated.

FREQUENT SPECIAL SALES.

"We follow the custom of the city department stores in having frequent sales, and each time we give the people something that they cannot fail to see is a bargain and which makes a lasting impression on them. Last fall we had a sale on prints which was a great success. We advertised to sell 10,000 yards at 2c. They cost us 3½c. By nine o'clock, the time set for the sale to commence, the store was packed with women. Prints were just what they wanted at that time, and a more fortunate choice of an article on which to make a special price could not have been made. When we commenced to sell, the wrapper girl was swamped in five minutes, so we didn't attempt to wrap the goods after that. All the scenes were enacted there in those few hours that you read of in connection with bargain days in city stores. The whole 10,000 yards were soon disposed of. Enough other goods were bought that day to make us come out about even, but the advertising it gave us cannot be estimated in dollars and cents.

"We have two standing bargains which are not equalled by any other store in that part of the country. They are nails at 2½c. a pound and thread at 3c. a spool. This scheme has been a great drawing card, and it is known everywhere for miles about that our store is the place to buy nails and thread. In all our advertising we make these two items prominent, and never change the prices.

BARGAIN PRICES ON TWO SMALL LINES.

"Our method of advertising has been the result of considerable experimenting. The papers have not proved sufficient, and we do a great deal with posters and sign boards. The posters have the same matter on them that we would put in a newspaper ad. They are not so large but that they can be sent through the mail. I use all the cuts I can get, and always quote prices in large type. I get them up in different styles; first, a straight list of bargain offerings, and then, perhaps, an argumentative ad., showing the advantage of buying for cash and at our store, and, by way of illustration, quoting one or two prices.

"We use hundreds of fence signs. These are painted at odd hours, and then during a quiet week in trade I take a drive through the country for a few days and nail them up or paint the fences. The nail and thread bargains are good subjects for roadside advertising."

THE SATISFIED CUSTOMER IS THE BEST AD.

Another merchant with two stores said:

"I believe that the best advertisement is a satisfied customer, and I always keep that fact in mind when serving my trade. The importance of this does not detract from the importance of the regular methods of advertising. I believe in them, and try to adopt those plans that are best suited to our conditions.

"I find that different methods of advertising are necessary for different stores. My partner, who runs the other store, follows a different course than I do, and both seem to be the best plans under the circumstances. He gets out lots of circulars, quoting prices, and doesn't have much to do with the local papers. I don't believe in quoting prices too freely, for it simply gives my competitors a chance to cut under me. I only give prices in my advertising when I have something that I know can't be beat, yet I realize that the tendency more and more is to attach prices to everything, and I may be compelled to fall into line. I do most of my advertising in the papers.

LEGITIMATE METHODS PAY.

"There was a time when premium goods might be said to pay, but that time is past. I have used them and gained customers by them, but they have been overdone. One is likely to pay more than the trade is worth by this method of advertising. I have more faith in window dressing and other legitimate attractions, which, I believe, are just as effective in a small town as in a city. We

have limited facilities for trimming windows, but we make the best of them, and with very satisfactory results. It is hard to get a clerk who is naturally gifted for the work. I do all I can to encourage my employees to attempt it, and usually have some one who is fairly skilled."

BELIEVES IN A LEADER.

An Iowa merchant says he keeps his store prominent before the people as a bargain centre by offering at all times some one article at a price with which no one can compete. "Whenever I come to market," said he, "I look up some cheap but useful article on which I get a price which will enable me to sell it far below the regular retail price. It is always possible to find something of this kind in a job lot, and frequently I strike a great bargain.

"This article, whatever it may be, I use as a drawing card. For instance, I once sold tin cups, ordinarily worth 10c., for 3c. This may seem like a very insignificant matter and a slight attraction, but I know that hundreds of dollars worth of trade came my way, induced by those tin cups. I sold them exactly at what they cost me, and I knew no one else could make the same price without a loss. It has been the same with other things, and I consider the idea a good one.

"In advertising, I am, perhaps, somewhat at a disadvantage, owing to the lack of a good local paper. I make use of the one we have at times, and will do so more when it improves, as it seems likely to, but I am forced to depend largely upon circulars to make known any special bargains.

THE VALUE OF DIRECT APPEAL.

I have a mailing list of all the families in the surrounding country, as well as in the town, and every week or two I mail 100 or more letters or circulars. The names are selected according to the article or articles advertised, so that but few of the circulars are wasted. These always bring returns. Circulars, I believe, work better between retailer and consumer than between wholesaler and retailers. We merchants get so many letters and circulars that we usually throw the latter in the waste basket with hardly a glance at them, while a country family, who get very few letters of any kind, will open and read a circular, and, in all probability, be guided by its contents."

BACK FROM EUROPE.

Mr. Harvey Falls, of the firm of Northway, Anderson & Falls, Simcoe, has returned from his transatlantic business trip. He visited London, Liverpool, Manchester, and other cities in Britain, and also the gay capital of France. He sailed from Montreal, the ship taking the northern route, by way of Belle Isle.