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THE MANAGEMENT OF A BUSINESS.

THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF ARTICLES ON THE METHODS
OF ADMINISTERING THE OFFICE AND THE STORE.

PRELIMINARY PAPER BY AN OLD MERCHANT.

Specially written for THE DRY GOODS REVIEW.

IN responding to the request to write, for THE DRY GOODS REVIEW, the first of a series of articles on Business Management, I deem it proper to offer some remarks of a general nature on the whole question. Success in business pre-supposes certain qualities in the merchant himself. Rules for conducting a business are practical and suggestive. But, unless the merchant applies the rules with some knowledge of the principles that ought govern his general policy in trade matters, he is just as liable to make a mess of it as not. Systematic inspection of every branch of the business, or correct bookkeeping, important as these are, will not alone result in success. There must, in addition, be a comprehensive grasp of the proper methods, and what these are I wish, as briefly as possible, to outline from my experience as a merchant. Not that any one man, even during a long experience, masters perfectly the principles of sound business. But he possesses this advantage. He has tested the value of certain maxims and he knows which are most important.

I. First, I would put Integrity as the foundation stone of Business Management. This is not a sermon, and I merely deal with the matter from the business, not the moral standpoint. It pays every hour of the day to have a good reputation, to be trusted by the customer and employe alike, to become a sort of court of appeal whose decisions shall inspire confidence and be accepted as final. When there is a dispute about an account, or a promise made or any other detail, it is good for a business to be managed by a man whose word is taken, who is known not to be tricky, and whose good faith will not be questioned even should there be a misunderstanding on the subject involved. Then, in connection with the firm's credit, it is of great value to have a high reputation. In buying goods, in asking an extension (if necessary), in soliciting some privilege, reputation tells continually. The idea that other people will rob you if you are not ready to rob first, is not based on business experience. It is a diseased notion. The unfairness of competitors is a fruitful source of loss and trouble, but it is rather an exception than a rule to find a competitor breaking an understanding or violating some good rule to your injury. Supposing it proves impossible to maintain an understanding with the merchants

of your own city or locality, proceed on honest lines yourself, regardless of their policy, and in the long run it will pay. This was true during the years I was in trade, and, notwithstanding all one hears now, I believe the average honesty of merchants is just as high as it used to be. We must not judge by exceptional cases. In the office, therefore, as in the store, I would say fair

play and square dealing every time. Even the least departure from this rule lands you in unexpected difficulties. You need not be taken in, because you are honest. That is weakness. Honesty does not involve hesitation, doubt, fear and lack of promptness. Honesty is strength, and its fruits are quick decisions, readiness for emergency and longheadedness.

II. Secondly, what may be called System in Management should be steadfastly maintained. Everyone professes to be systematic in these days, but I mean that the manager of a business should be both the master and the servant of his own system. He cannot expect employes, when his back is turned, to obey rules he openly violates. In the matter of punctuality, the hour of opening, either for office or store, should be fixed, and, unless the manager has his deputy to act for him, he should always be on hand promptly. Just last week I noticed a case in point. The head of a large Montreal house was spending Sunday at a summer resort, and rose at half-past four on Monday morning so as to catch the first train into town. He said the staff expected him to be there promptly at nine o'clock to give certain orders and to supervise the letters. A later train would have delayed him half an hour. The habit which prompted him to do this was part of a good system practised during a long career. Punctuality extends into many different parts of the business: Into the matter of notes due, appointments made, deliveries of goods, etc. If the merchant is known to be particular in fulfilling all his engagements, others who deal with him will recognize this and try and respond. Even customers will not complain of a rule affecting them, when they feel that others are also bound by it. The effect on employes is remarkable. A young clerk consciously models his conduct, while on duty, upon that of his employer. In this connection, it may be said briefly that as regards the use of liquor and tobacco the invariable practice should be: Total abstinence during business hours. Neatness in dress is indispensable. These, and a number of other details, are necessary parts in the make-up of a sound business manager.

Memory is almost a necessity in business. Where a man feels that he may forget, and his duties are many, he is apt to keep a note book. For young merchants, a better rule is to discipline the memory by doing one thing at a time and by carefully fixing the thoughts in the mind beforehand. There is also the question of