

COMMERCIAL TRAVELERS, THE RAILWAYS AND BAGGAGE.

THE question of convenience, time and profit, in relation to the commercial travelers and the railways, suggests a few ideas which might be considered by both interests.

The railways and their employees are, as a rule, ever ready to facilitate this part of their traffic, and it is no small part, either.

The commercial travelers have rarely appreciated the trouble the railways have in the handling, checking and all the other *ceteræ* of this immense traffic.

There are probably 10,000 commercial travelers, carrying, in the year, say, nearly 5,000 tons of baggage, on which the railways collect nothing direct. When this is considered, with the cost of the excess cards, prepaid certificates, and baggage-men, it is easily seen that the balance of baggage that pays its way must also pay for that which is nominally free.

Why not make all commercial baggage pay for being carried, and formulate a price that would be known to everyone—say, 100 lb. of baggage, 100 miles, for 10c.? This sum may be too low or too high, but no doubt their mathematicians could give a price that would pay the railways.

Were this system introduced, it would save the railways the cost of excess tickets and prepaid certificates. It would save the baggagemen no end of trouble just when a train was leaving. It would end the question of a commercial traveler handing any baggage to a companion going light. The idea being still further followed out would be facilitated by books of coupon tickets, which could be issued by the railways for any mileage or weight of baggage, and interchangeable on any line of railway or boat.

So far this may read as if it was all well studied out for the railways' benefit, but an idea to be of enough value for adoption between two people must be of value to both.

Were this idea adopted, the commercial travelers could have their baggage all settled for, before they leave for their trip, by the firm. When leaving a station, the time lost in having to be there long before train time to have excess made out or prepaid certificate attended to, is well known to mostly every man on the road. Under this idea, commercial baggage could be checked as any ordinary traveler's trunks. On arrival at its destination it could be settled for by the commercial traveler. If he traveled 50 miles he would simply give up 50 miles in coupons. Every firm knows to a pound or two what their travelers are carrying and how long a trip they will have, so the matter could easily be calculated, and it is much satisfaction to know your baggage is all settled for. By this idea the commercial traveler has the very last moment in the town he is leaving for business, just saving enough time to pack and get to the station. Under the present system he must be there from at least a quarter of an hour before train time. Then, a commercial traveler has more time when he arrives to look after the railway's requirements.

These books of coupons would have the commercial traveler's name and certificate number and firm's name. Each coupon being numbered, belonging to a series, would easily be checked by the railways.

Should a commercial traveler send part of his baggage back to his firm before he has completed his trip it is easy to compute the number of coupons to pay on the balance.

Should a commercial traveler not use his entire book, the balance could be used on a later trip, or used as part payment on a new book.

The amount of money saved to the railways by this method would very likely permit a reduction of the rate per mile on commercial travelers' passenger transportation, possibly bringing it to 2c. a mile, and, if this were so, there would be no reason why the employers of travelers would not also buy the passenger as well as the baggage transportation for their travelers, for their entire trip, before they leave.

These suggestions are submitted for criticism, and the promoter would be glad to get opinions from men on the road.

A COMMERCIAL TRAVELER.

FAVORITE FABRICS.

Among fabrics most favored, the first in rank is cloth of which at least two-thirds of both walking and, of course, tailor costumes are constructed. In fact, cloth meets with such general approval that it is even employed for visiting dresses, and very stylish and elegant it looks. "We have brought out several very handsome ranges of ladies' cloth," said Brophy, Cains & Co., "in both British and foreign makes, in the latest Parisian shades."

LACE.

Lace consumers are becoming much better informed in regard to laces than they have been heretofore. They select them with more care, and show more appreciation of the beauty of the pattern and the fineness of the mesh. "We," said Brophy, Cains & Co., "would add to this, that buyers will find that it pays to consider the growing exactions of the public in these matters, and in making their selections for the coming season should bear in mind that the tendency is decidedly toward a higher grade of goods. We are showing very handsome laces for the incoming season."

GIVING SAMPLES.

The big city houses are making quite a feature now of giving samples. In this way they please lady buyers and advertise their own stores. The samples they send out are quite small, but the ladies seem to be satisfied with a very narrow piece of goods. To facilitate this giving of samples, a little device, called the "Century Sampler and Pricer," has been invented and just put on the market. The "Sampler" has a number of good features about it, and enables the retail merchant to keep a very sharp eye both as to his prices and to the samples of goods. It is a cheap article, and saves itself both in time and in goods. John Macdonald & Co. are handling the device in Canada, and any retail merchant interested may write them for a sample.

READY FOR A BIG SEASON.

The great increase in the demand for millinery, from all quarters of the Dominion this year, has been a good test of the enterprise of the wholesale houses. All the progressive houses have responded to the development, by improving their facilities and enlarging their preparations for the Spring trade of 1900. Chas. Reid & Co., of Toronto, have suited their preparations to the season. Their buyers have examined the latest productions of all the great designing markets, and have secured large quantities of the newest goods desirable for this market. This company direct special attention to their stock and pattern hats, but their general stock is so large and varied that even a casual examination would be to the advantage of buyers.