

turn about, the smiles of persuasion, satisfaction and good nature, or drop them for the normal expression of his natural man. He is compelled to be an observer of a certain sort in the interests of his trade. He must probe men with a glance and guess their habits, wants, and above all their solvency. To economize time he must come to quick decisions as to his chances of success—a practice that makes him more or less a man of judgment. Blest with the eloquence of a hot water spigot turned on at will, he can check or let run, without floundering, the collection of phrases which he keeps on tap, and which produre upon his victims the effect of a moral shower bath. Called by us in the vernacular "the gift of the gab," "Loquacious as a cricket, he smokes, drinks, wears a profusion of trinkets, and never permits himself to be 'stumped'—a slang expression all his own. Activity is not the least surprising quality of this human machine. Not the hawk swooping upon its prey, not the stag doubling before the huntsman and the hounds, nor the hounds themselves catching scent of the game, can be compared with him for the rapidity of his dart when he spies a 'commission,' for the agility with which he trips up a rival and gets ahead of him, for the keenness of his scent as he noses a customer and discovers the spot where he can get off his wares."

"How many great qualities must such a man possess. You will find in all countries many such diplomats of low degree: consummate negotiators arguing in the interests of calico, jewels, frippery, wines, and often displaying more true diplomacy than ambassadors themselves, who for the most part, know only the forms of it. No one in France can doubt the powers of the commercial traveller, that intrepid soul who dares all, and boldly brings the genius of civilization and the modern inventions into a struggle with the plain common sense of remote villages, and the ignorant and boorish 'readmill' of provincial ways. Can we ever forget the skilful manoeuvres by which he worms himself into the minds of the populace, bringing a volume of words to bear upon the refractory, reminding us of the indefatigable worker in marble whose file eats slowly into a block of porphyry? Would you seek to know the utmost power of language, or the strongest pressure that a phrase can bring to bear against rebellious lucre, against the miserly proprietor squatting in the recesses of his country lair? Listen to one of these great ambassadors of industry as he revolves and works and sucks like an intelligent piston of the steam engine called speculation."

"Let us walk around the Commercial traveller, and look at him well. In the first place, what an acrobat, what a circus, what a battery, all in one, is the man himself, his vocation, and his tongue! Intrepid mariner, he plunges in, armed with a few phrases, to catch five or six hundred thousand francs in the frozen seas, in the domain of the red

Indians who inhabit the interior of France. The provincial fish will not rise to harpoons and torches; it can only be taken with seines and nets and gentlest persuasions. The traveller's business is to extract the gold in the country "catches," by a purely intellectual operation, and to extract it pleasantly and without pain. Can you think without a shudder of the flood of phrases which, day by day, renewed each dawn, leaps in cascades the length and breadth of sunny France?"

"You know the species; let us now look at the individual."

Balzac then goes on to describe the "Illustrious Gaudissart." Lack of space and time prevents our describing in detail all the qualities of this famous traveller, and we must ask our readers to look up the works of this renowned Frenchman and revel in the grand portrayal for themselves, but we might cursorily glance at "this incomparable commercial traveller," the paragon of his race, a man who possesses in the highest degree all the qualifications necessary to the nature of his success, and hold the mirror up to the faces of our own "knights of the grip."

"His speech," says Balzac "is vitriol and likewise glue to catch and entangle his victim and make him sticky and easy to grip. vitriol to dissolve hard heads, close fists, and closer calculations. His line was once 'the hat,' but his talents and the art with which he snared the wariest provincial had brought him such commercial celebrity that all vendors of the 'article Paris' (small wares of all kinds) paid court to him, and humbly begged that he would deign to undertake their commissions."

A description then follows of how he was wined and dined on his return home trips, and how his renown, his vogue, and the flatteries showered upon him gained him the name of "Illustrious."

"All things smiled upon our traveller, and the traveller smiled back in return. Similia similibus—he believed in homeopathy. Puns, horse laugh, clothing, body, mind and features, all pulled together to put a devil-may-care jollity into every inch of his person. Free handed and easy going, the man who jumps lightly to the top of a stage-coach, gives a hand to the timid lady who fears to step down, jokes with the postilion about his neckerchief and contrives to sell him a cap, smiles at the maids, gurgles at dinner like a bottle of wine and pretends to draw the cork by sounding a filip on his distended cheek; plays a tune with his knife on the champagne glasses without breaking them, chaffs the timid traveller, contradicts the knowing one, lords it over a dinner-table and manages to get the titbits for himself. A strong fellow, nevertheless, he can throw aside all nonsense and mean business when he flings away the stump of his cigar and says with a glance at some town, 'I'll see what these people have got in their pockets. All things to all men, he knew how to accost

a banker like a capitalist, a magistrate like a functionary, a royalist with pious and monarchical sentiments, a 'bourgeois' as one of themselves. In short, wherever he was, he was just what he ought to be, he left Gaudissart at the door when he went in, and picked him up again when he went out."

"In his close relation to the caprices of humanity the varied paths of commerce had enabled him to observe the windings of the heart of man. He has learned the secret of persuasive eloquence, the knack of loosening the tightest purse strings, the art of arousing desire in the souls of husbands, wives, children and servants, and what is more he knew how to satisfy it. No one had greater faculty than he for inveigling a merchant by the charms of a bargain, and disappearing at the instant when desire had reached a crisis. Full of gratitude to the hat making trade, he always declared that it was his efforts in behalf of the exterior of the human head which had enabled him to understand its interior, he had capped and crowned so many people, he was always flinging himself at their heads, etc. His jokes about hats and heads were irrepressible, though perhaps not dazzling."

Who of our readers that has had any extended experience with commercial travellers will not catch in the graphic description of the great French philosopher a living echo of the "Illustrious Gaudissart" in the person of our own travellers. True, the Gaudissart of the latter end of the nineteenth century has become more settled, stable and less flighty and more given to solid business, while horse-play and kindred amusements of Balzac's hero have been relegated to the shelf of forgetfulness. There is not wanting, however, that perfect and intuitive knowledge of human nature without which no traveller can be said to be successful. He may possess geniality, dress well, deport himself becomingly, but unless he has the faculty of worming himself into the inner-self of his customers and creating in them the desire to buy where no desire exists, or at best is but weak, in other words, unless he can hypnotize his subject he will not be "on the road" long. One might travesty Horace and say "Venditor nascitur, non fit," THE SALESMAN IS BORN NOT MADE.

We hope the few extracts taken from Balzac will be of interest to our readers and to commercial men generally, and though some of the characteristics of Gaudissart may not be adaptable to our time, still we think a good deal of pleasurable enjoyment can be obtained by reflecting that "the Commercial Traveller" has been considered worthy of portrayal by a man so great, so eminently wise, learned, erudite and immortal as Balzac. One word more to our readers. Buy Balzac's works and see yourselves.—WM. H. SEYLER.

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