

### THE HAPPY MEDIUM.

There are three classes of buyers in trade one who buys too much, one too little, and the other who draws the line between the two, and strikes the happy medium. The first, as a rule, is always burdened with too much stock. Seasons come and go and his shelves are always filled with goods out of fashion and out of season. As a rule, he is always short of money, behind with his bills, simply because he buys too much.

The merchant who buys too little or too small a stock lacks knowledge of his trade, and loses custom by not keeping a sufficient supply on hand to meet the current wants of his customers. Over-cautiousness in this direction is almost as bad as over-buying. It often gives his competitors the means of supplying his regular customers. The good merchant will note what lines sell best, and consult with his clerks, or those at the head of the departments of his establishment.

We often hear customers say, "We would like to buy of Mr. So-and-So, but he buys such a small quantity of an article that there is no opportunity for selection, so we go elsewhere. Indeed, he is very careful about ordering goods." This class of merchants never build up nor do a large trade. They, as a rule, do a small business. Their over-cautiousness and lack of knowledge of the real wants of the trade of their sections prevent them from increasing sales.

The merchant who knows what to buy and how much to buy is the progressive and successful one. He studies his trade, comes to market often, never overloads, and gets as near a cash basis as possible. When bargains are presented to him he is quick to see the real one and to act accordingly. He buys for customers whose tastes he understands, and is regarded by his patrons, as well as by the jobbers, as the bright, keen merchant who keeps abreast of the times. He is in good credit and is a success in his line of trade.

### LOOKING FORWARD.

In a recent short and pleasing story by an English writer of note there is introduced to the reader the case of a young German who has left his home with the determination to study and acquire English business methods. He arrives in London, articles himself to an influential and established commercial house at a remuneration so small that it would be possible for no one but a German to convert pound, shilling and pence into proportionate parts of maintenance with a positive margin for a rainy day. He acquires proficiency in a majority of the continental languages, thus of value to distant correspondents of his employers. During all this time, while closely attentive to his duties, he possesses himself of methods and information which shall some day stand to him as so many pounds sterling. To make a long story

short, there is that in his language, when explaining his position to a friend of his, which has furnished the theme for our sketch. It is this: "Do you think that I shall be content to remain here as a clerk?"

Whatever was the future success of the young German, we are not further informed. Suffice it that we have his comment, and that it may assist us to so improve opportunities and stimulate activity as to enhance our present condition and make us worthy and successful in all the serious and responsible business of life we may be called upon to engage in. We presume there is not one clerk among all the grocers' establishments which the American Grocer reaches who is not desirous of improving his condition, or looking forward to the time when he shall have worthily succeeded to his employer's holding or have launched out as a youthful competitor. If there is such a one, we beg to say to him, in all kindness, that a grocer's life is not for him, that the rank and file of his fellow-employees will not regard him as a worthy addition, that he will be a hindrance to them and a source of dissatisfaction to his employers, that the duties of a grocer's assistant call for continued activity, of keen watchfulness as to detail, for more than ordinary intelligence, for gentlemanly and courteous bearing towards superiors, inferiors and equals; in short, to endeavour towards such perfection that his employer might be heard to say of him: "I don't see how I could dispense with that young man's services," or words of similar import.

We will take the requisite of intelligence alone from the number we have mentioned above as illustrative of one of the means to beget confidence and secure the regard of the customer. Questions such as these, for instance, are asked: "Why are Vostizza currants superior? Where is tapioca found, and how is it prepared for market? What are the merits of Assam tea, and where is Assam? Why is the Mocha coffee berry so unsightly?" When the customer comes to you for information of this order, are you prepared to offer him an intelligent answer? When an order is sent in for some French peas, you send him a tin of Champignons or Haricots zeits. Madame, who is a good customer, is much displeased with the error; she wished them for dinner. The grocer or his assistant is profuse in his apologies, the delivery boy is posted in great haste, if possible to remedy the matters. Has it happened before? No doubt of it. Well, how can it be avoided in the future? Does someone suggest that the easiest way out of the woods will be to place the peas in one part of the store and the mushrooms in another?

The writer, in conclusion, begs to suggest that the grocers' assistants of this country can in no way advance their own interests in every sense of the word and arrive at a conscious satisfaction which will not appear in the weekly stipend, better than by following

the advice of an inspired writer: "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might."

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### OFFICE SALESMEN.

A writer in a recent issue of *The Office*, discussing the treatment of customers who call on the home concern, as contrasted with the treatment of those who are regularly visited by the travelling salesmen of the house, presents the following:

"It has seemed to me, for some time past, that the matter of office salesmen in business houses is, in a great measure, a neglected subject. A merchant will use his utmost endeavors to secure the services of gilt-edged roadmen, and, having obtained his traveller, after much time, labor and skilful maneuvering, he will sit quietly in his chair expecting the man on the road to bring in the business. Such management puts the office in the position of a clearing-house, not of a live, active factor in the business transacted. Is this a proper way to conduct any business office? Frequently I have had occasion to enter large establishments where, on opening the door, a wilderness of goods greeted me, but no human face. Sometimes I have gone a distance of from 100 to 200 feet into a large city warehouse, and finally run against the office partition at the lower end, where a hard-worked bookkeeper, trying to find his balance, glared at me through the cashier's pigeon-hole, and in crusty tones asked, "What do you want?" That this is not an unusual case, nor an overdrawn picture, any man who has had occasion to enter large wholesale houses in New York and other cities can testify.

There are, however, some brilliant and shining exceptions to the rule. Of one case, a wholesale house in New York, I can speak from pleasant experience. At the head of the entrance stairs sits one of the partners of the concern. It is, of course, impossible for him to see every man who comes in, but every man who does come in is met at the top of the stairs by a clerk of pleasing address, who inquires his business. He is then referred to some salesman, who is instantly at his service. Should the visitor happen to be a large buyer in this particular line of goods, he is referred at once to the salesman partner already mentioned. This man was given an interest in the house, originally, on account of the immense amount of goods he could dispose of on the road. But does the ex-road salesman and present partner greet the visitor who has come in, perhaps only to make a friendly call, with a curt, "What do you want?" Not so, at all. A hearty grasp of the hand, and "How are you?" uttered in whole-souled, magnetic tones, an inquiry as to the health of his family, and these various little incidentals that mean practically nothing, and yet are fraught with so much good-will and interest to a man, and which