

THROUGH A MONOCLE

TOLD IN A PULLMAN SMOKER

THERE are few places that I like better than the smoking-room of a Pullman. I often learn more there while waiting for the porter to make up my berth than I used to learn in a week in a college class-room. It is a sort of side-window looking into life. The other night, two men sat down opposite each other near the window—one taking the only chair, of course—and began to tell each other stories about how they, and certain other fellows whom they always called by their first names, made "sales." I did not gather what they themselves sold, but the hero of their epic whose name was "Billy" sold automobiles. And the tales they told of "Billy's" prowess and "Billy's" nerve and "Billy's" colossal success kept me entertained till the porter would have had time to make up the berths of a whole car. It seemed that "Billy's" most punishing method was to "make the other man feel small." All these old-fashioned ideas about pleasing your customer and ingratiating yourself with the man to whom you hope to make a "sale," did not "go" with "Billy." He knew a trick worth several of that.

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A PROSPECTIVE customer complained to "Billy" one day that he had taken up considerable of his time. "Your time!" vociferated "Billy." "Your time! How much is your time worth? I suppose you consider yourself lucky if you can sell your time for ten dollars an hour. Now my time is worth at least fifty dollars an hour on an average, and I have got the books to show it. Talk about wasting your time! Why, I'll pay you ten dollars an hour for your time while we are trying this machine." And much more of the same sort. "And," said the man who was telling the story, "it went." That is, the customer was overawed by the bluff. Pounded into a mentally pulpy state by this assault, he did not resent "Billy's" impudence, but stayed and bought the car. Then one of the two told how he sold a grocer something—it may have been a cash register—by the same method, somewhat attenuated. Another man had been pleading with the grocer for an hour, the grocer sitting superior with "a sour face on him." Then this man sailed in with a profane attack upon the grocer's business capacity that quite staggered that worthy, and, in ten minutes, the trick was done.

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"THE thing," said one of them impressively, "is to make the other man feel foolish. Make him feel that you know more about it than he does. If you let him keep the superior position, then he prides himself on keeping you from 'selling' him. When you go out, he says—'Ah, ha! that man couldn't talk me into taking his goods.' But if you put him in his place right off, he is not so cocky—you can

convince him that you have got the very thing he wants. Even if he does not buy, he thinks you are a smart fellow." I put this down here for the benefit of young salesmen, and will make no extra charge for the hint. Of course, I do not warrant the goods. I do not know whether this is good or bad policy when face to face with a husky customer. It ought to result in getting the salesman thrown out the window. But it may not. These men did not look as if they usually made their exits in that way. Still any reader who tries it must do so at his own expense.

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I HAVE been wondering ever since if that is modern trade. In writing the good old word "trade," I apologise to it for mentioning it in such a connection. This sort of thing is certainly not "trade" as we peaceful—and, I hope, polite—people have always understood it. It is much more like highway robbery. It is taking a man by his mental throat and choking his money out him. There is no doubt whatever that big corporations, which stand to clear fat profits on the sale of their goods, can afford to pay mental and verbal thugs to go about "sandbagging" feeble folk into taking their wares and paying for them. But never in the world can that be called business. It is foot-padding. It is holding up a merchant in his own store and going through his cash box. It is all very well—though very uncharitable—to feel contempt for a man who is mentally weaker than you are; but you have no more right to use your superior mental strength to stun him into a condition of mind when he will give his money to you than you would have to use superior physical strength to the same criminal end.

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IT is no wonder that we have corruption in politics when we will openly boast of thuggery and corruption in private business. Corruption in private business we certainly do have to an alarming extent. It is not only a matter of secret commissions to agents of other men—which we are now making illegal—but the systematic misrepresentation that goes on in the selling of goods. We have come to such a pass that we are inclined to regard a man as a fool who takes a merchant's word for the quality of his wares. We expect him to look out for himself. If he is to be caught by lying, well, so much the worse for him. When the grocer and the dry-goods merchant will betray their trust, why should they expect the politician whom they employ to have a higher standard of honour? The alderman may steal from the citizen at the City Hall, but he is fairly certain that the citizen will steal from him out of his basket of groceries or his parcel of dry goods. Usually the politicians do not try the methods of the "thug." They would not dare. There would be men in their constituency who would resent it and rally the cowardly others to a similar resentment. Highway robbery so far is confined to the methods of "honest trade."

THE MONOCLE MAN.

AMATEUR PLAYERS OF TORONTO—WINNERS EARL GREY DRAMATIC TROPHY FOR 1909.



Mr. T. W. Lawson

Mr. Douglas Kelley

Miss Christobel Robinson

Mr. Eric T. Owen

Miss Elsie U. Maclean

Mr. J. Beverley Robinson