

No. 27

HOW TO CONDUCT
A SMALL
MAIL ORDER
BUSINESS



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HINTS ON CONDUCTING

—A SMALL—

MAIL ORDER BUSINESS.

There are, in the United States and Canada, hundreds of concerns who obtain their revenue almost exclusively by means of transacting business through the mails. In addition to these, many regular city retailers have of late opened departments for mail order trade.

The habit of purchasing by mail is rapidly assuming enormous proportions in this country, and the custom has been catered to, in such a manner, that the ranchman on the plains may wear a latest style metropolitan custom made suit, while his daughters may equip herself *a la* Fifth Avenue—all by inspection of a catalogue, a postal money order and a letter.

Good Postal System.

These facilities have been brought about by the general march of improvement, and, perhaps, more particularly on account of the greatly improved postal system. Almost every intelligent

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person has had more or less experience in buying through the mails, but the object of this little book is to show how a small business can be profitably conducted for this purpose.

Start Right.

One of the most essential things to start with is an attractive article or line of goods. Shall it be in the nature of a staple or a novelty? The difficulty in handling staple goods in a small way is the lack of profit.

Staple Goods.

Staple goods are handled by retailers everywhere, and, people will not readily send away for that which they can procure at home. Of course, there is always more or less mail trade on specialties in the line of staples, such as Plymouth Rock Pants, Douglas' Shoes, etc., but even then, manufacturers tell me that there is no profit in the mail orders, they are handled merely for the sake of augmenting regular trade by making the goods popular.

Perhaps I might make an exception in the staple list of watches, silverware and jewelry. These are good mail order sellers.

Numerous Novelties.

In the line of novelties, there are hundreds of things such as books, toys, games, photographs, perfumery, etc.

Small toys, not easily broken, and of light weight when packed, sell in immense quantities if advertised in November and December. Of course, the advertisement must be properly arranged, good journals used, and the price of the toy should be small.

"Frozen Perfumery."

Millions of perfumed cakes of Plaster-Paris, put in small ornamented tin boxes, have been sold during the past ten years. These goods cost about 4 cents each, can be sold at ten cents, give satisfaction if well made and can be mailed at a cost of a cent each for postage, which will admit of the "wonder stone" being wrapped in a quantity of advertising circulars.

One or two ingenious advertisers put up packages of sachet powder and sell them as "Love Powders." They are said to enable the recipient to "gain and maintain the love of another."

Several Saleable Specialties.

Cheap books usually sell well if they are at

attractively written up and advertised in the right kind of papers. Millions of copies of certain books have been sold at ten cents through the mails. Of the MULTUM IN PARVO LIBRARY, of which this little treatise is one, several millions have been sold at ten cents per set of twelve titles.

People readily buy Japanese napkins, sometimes advertised as handkerchiefs, (which they really are), but the great sale may be due somewhat to the fact that our country cousins do not really know what a Japanese crepe handkerchief is and fondly imagine that they are to get a fifteen inch pure silk affair. These goods can be procured of Japanese importers in New York, Chicago, San Francisco and other cities.

Cheap jewelry, such as rings, chains and the like, generally sell well. The prices should be low and the description must be strong, to attract trade, however.

Watches by Mail.

The watch mail order business is very large. As a rule, Swiss watches are the sort dealt in. The values of American watches are quite well known, and they are on sale everywhere; but the Swiss watches can be described in cash attracting adjectives and when sold the margin of profit is fairly good.

Indecent Advertising.

Avoid the temptation to sell obscene goods, or to sell any sort of stuff by so-called suggestive announcements. This kind of business is profitable while it lasts, but it usually ends in bringing the advertiser into disrepute and imprisonment.

Don't Lie.

In writing a description of your goods, do not misrepresent them. A dash of adjectives now and then is customary and acceptable, for mild exaggeration is expected. Nevertheless you must not say that a ring has a diamond setting if it is only glass.

Send Circulars.

Have a catalogue or set of circulars advertising various specialties, and send this printed matter out with every package. If your first filling of an order gives satisfaction, you are quite sure to get a second order, and possibly several subsequent orders.

Letters are Valuable.

The letters that you receive from country customers are more or less valuable. Other dealers will purchase them of you for purpose of using the addresses in sending out their own catalogues.

Good Sellers.

Cheap books with attractive titles are usually fast selling property, and if contents are as advertised, always give satisfaction. The Keystone Book and News Co., 1111 Arch St., Philadelphia, are among the leading wholesalers. They send trade circulars only to persons who prove themselves to be regularly engaged in the mail order business.

Medical Business.

It is surprising to note what a vast amount of medicine is sent through the mails. There are remedies for all diseases to which the flesh is heir. If you have a good tonic, blood purifier, skin beautifier or other preparation which you wish to push the sale of, the better way to get "points" is to answer the advertisements of other concerns advertising similar specialties and learn their methods. But do not copy other concerns' literature; simply pick out a few good ideas and combine them with your own originality.

Advertising Agencies.

A large proportion of advertising is placed through so-called agents. They are a legion. About a dozen make a specialty of mail order ad-

vertising. You can get further information by reading a copy of *Our Silent Partner*, which you can obtain free by writing to Fred Terry, Waterville, Maine. There are a large number of publications that pay for mail order advertising, and a much larger number which do not pay the advertiser.

Not Tolerated.

The U. S. and Canadian postal officials do not encourage so-called "work at home" schemes which usually take money out of poor people's pockets. Many alleged offenders have been prosecuted for doing this sort of business.

Watch Your Mailing.

If you are doing a large mailing don't neglect to make it a part of your duties to step in and watch the operations of your mailing clerks frequently. An employe sometimes forgets postal rates and wastes a great deal of money. We know an advertiser whose clerk sent out six thousand packages with four cents postage on each when the packages, consisting of printing matter, could have traveled at two cents. Most of the successful mail order advertisers keep their eyes on such details and they save money thereby.

Not Good Criterion.

The so-called "cost and result" schedules are usually only valuable to the advertiser who prepares them as a result of his own experience. To all others who consider them, they are a delusion and a snare. Suppose an advertisement of a watch is placed in a list of publications by a watch dealer, a picture dealer, a medical advertiser, a novelty man and an agents' supply house. There will be quite a striking difference in the ratio of results in each instance. A paper that pays one may not pay the other. We have seen this demonstrated so many times that we know whereof we speak.

Advertising Axioms.

"Virtue increases under a weight or burden" and results increase with a comprehensive expenditure of money in good advertising mediums.

"Better late than never." The golden opportunity is still open to him who would enrich himself by judicious advertising. None other way will pay.

"Mind moves matter." Therefore exercise your mind to advertise so as to stir the gray matter of the brains of the people and affect their pocket-books.

Good goods will sell to good people constantly. Poor goods only once. Don't let people say, "after having praised their wine they sell us vinegar."

"There is no lock but a golden key will open it," except that of the people's pocket-book. First class ads will do this with golden results. When people think they want a thing, they do want it and they get it.

To be prominent anywhere one must have marked characteristics. So it is with an advertisement in the crowded columns of newspapers and magazines; in order to produce the best results it must be clear, definite, conspicuous and fresh. *Is yours of this character?*

Free.

There's the catch word of all humanity. Fifty years ago it was the most potent word in the language, and all the advertising experts who have developed since have not succeeded in devising one to succeed it.

Look over the papers which are read by the simple country folk, and note how that word stands out all over them. The article advertised goes in agate type below it. The particulars about what stamps or coins must be sent to secure the "free" article, go in minion. The ad. may

occupy but an inch, and half of the inch may consist of the one word "Free," but the advertising evidently pays if continuance signifies profit.

One sometimes wonders where the crop of gold brick victims constantly comes from, where the green goods men continually find patrons, and why confidence men grow more numerous as their wiles become better advertised. There is a greater crop of "Free" victims growing somewhere. It is hard to believe that anyone answers a "Free" ad. twice, but this class of advertising grows and prospers. This is a large country, and the boys who are growing up must all learn by experience what their fathers learned likewise. No youth seems content to be taught in any other way. It looks as if there was no danger of any lack of advertising to teach them.—*Exchange*.

The Old Story.

A man generally knows his own business well enough to make money out of it. When he attempts another business he finds that some other fellow has learned that business better than he has, evidently. Few men ever learn enough about more than one business to make both or all of them pay.

Profitable Catalogues.

Mr. John Lynn, of 48 Bond St., New York is a successful dealer in novelties; his catalogue is very attractive.

Another successful dealer is Chas. E. Marshall, Lockport, N. Y. His catalogue is a winner.

Montgomery Ward & Co., Chicago, do the largest mail order business in the world. Their catalogue is quite a large volume in itself.

Gets One on Depew.

This is one of the stories about Chauncey M. Depew and a railroad pass that is being told nowadays in local railroad circles.

The president of the Waupaca and Nishna Railroad company went to see the mild-mannered president of the Vanderbilt system.

"What can I do for you?" Mr. Depew asked, letting the smile he uses on such occasions have full swing at the visitor.

"I dropped in to see you, Mr. Depew, to ask for an exchange of courtesies. I am the president of the Waupaca and Nishna Railroad company. I would like to have a pass over your road and will extend the same courtesy to yourself over my road."

Depew looked thoughtful for a minute. ~~Then~~
 He said:

"Where is your road?"

"Why, it's out in Wisconsin."

"Is it rated in Poor's manual?"

"Oh, yes, indeed; we paid a nice dividend ~~last~~
 year."

"Strange. I never heard of your road. How
 long is it?"

"We are operating sixty-seven miles this year."

"What, sixty-seven miles, and you call that an
 exchange of courtesy, and the Vanderbilt system
 has its thousands of miles?"

Depew assumed his most cavalier air as he
 launched that question at the head of the presi-
 dent of the Waupaca and Nishna and then he
 waited for a reply.

"Well, Mr. Depew," said the western railroad
 president as he arose to go, "your road may be a
 little longer than mine, but it ain't any wider."

His Joke Worked Badly.

A young man who seemed to be boiling over to
 do something smart was a passenger on a Michigan
 avenue car the other day. After racking his mas-
 sive brain for a while he took out a silver dollar
 and laid it on the seat and took a seat opposite.
 The car soon stopped at a crossing to let on an old

woman with a basket. She saw the empty seat and the dollar, and it didn't take her over thirty seconds to drop herself into the place and the dollar into her pocket.

"Excuse me, ma'am," said the joker, "but I've lost a dollar. I think I left it on that seat."

"I don't," she bluntly replied.

"But I'm sure of it. Did you pick up a dollar?"

"None of your business, sir."

"But all of us saw you pick it up, ma'am, and I can prove it was mine."

"Look a' here, young chap," she said, as she put down her basket, "if it's a row you want you'll find me ready. I allow no one to walk on me."

"But, ma'am, I left——"

"Come on, then," she said, as she stood and doubled up her fists. "I am a peaceful woman, and I want to get along the easiest way, but if I must I will."

Everybody began to clap and laugh, and the smart Aleck took a drop off the platform without asking what it was all about.

Mike's Dilemma.

Mike is an Irishman just fresh from the Emerald Isle, who recently came to Hackensack, N. J., and was employed by two gentlemen, each keeping a horse in the same stable, to look after their

equines. One day Mr. Jones told Mike to hitchup his horse and bring it around to his residence.

Mike did as he was bidden, but when Mr. Jones saw the turnout he said: "Why, Mike, that is not my horse, that is Mr. Smith's animal."

"Begorra," promptly replied Mike, "so it is. I knowed that wasn't your horse, sir, but I couldn't quite make up my mind which horse belonged to the other gintleman."

A Rank Failure.

"I don't believe whippings do children any good," said Mrs. Wiggins. "Why, I whipped Johnny at the photographer's three times because he wouldn't look pleasant and he still looked as cross and disagreeable as ever."

At Reduced Speed.

Uncle Hays—"Member the Hawkins boys who ran away to jine a theatre company?"

Aunt Marthy—"Why, yes! What about 'em?"

Uncle Hays (quietly)—"They've walked back."

Two Feminine Views of Adam.

First Nineteenth Century Girl—I never did have any opinion of Adam. A man who could excuse himself by saying, "The woman tempted me," had none of the instincts of a gentleman."

Second Ditto—But what could you expect of the first man? You know it takes three generations to make a gentleman.

Posted on the Ring.

"Strange," remarked Mrs. Brown, "I have rung at Mrs. Smith's door three times this week, and I didn't succeed in arousing anyone. I suppose the family is out of town!"

"Possibly," replied Mrs. Jones; "but Mrs. Smith was telling me just now that she could tell her ring among a thousand."