

AMERICAN OPINION

THE ROAD
TO
SALESMANSHIP

by

Robert H. W. Welch, Jr.

REPRINT SERIES

One Dollar

THE ROAD TO SALESMANSHIP

By

ROBERT H. W. WELCH, Jr.

SALES MANAGER, JAMES O. WELCH CO.

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THE ROAD TO
SALFEMANSHIP

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A Warning to the Library

August 1, 1901

Dear Sirs:

I have just received your letter of the 28th inst. regarding the purchase of a copy of the book "The Library" and I am glad to hear that you are interested in it.

TO A GOOD SALESMAN

VICTOR ELVING

The book is a very interesting one and I am sure that you will find it of great value. It is a book that every library should have and I am sure that you will be glad to purchase it. I am sure that you will find it of great value and I am sure that you will be glad to purchase it.

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Very truly,
Victor Elving

A Warning To The Unwary

August 1, 1967

Dear Reader:

The small book now reproduced on the following pages has long been out of print, out of date, and out of fashion. Spend no further time on it except at your own risk.

The manuscript was accepted, and a hardbound edition brought out, by the very first publisher to whom it was submitted. But that was in 1940. Not only have times changed since so ancient an era, but they had changed drastically before The Ronald Press Company could even get this book into print.

For *The Road to Salesmanship* was intended primarily as something for the president of a manufacturing company to give to the members of his sales force. By the time it actually appeared on the market, however, that particular market had suffered a collapse—due, paradoxically, to the booming health of practically all other markets.

In 1941 the Second World War, and America's visibly approaching participation in that war, were already creating such a demand for goods—of almost every kind except books on salesmanship—that salesmen were no longer even needed. Those kept on the payroll by the more tender hearted managements were usually given the jobs of running the elevators. Temporarily, of course. But some of those salesmen didn't get out of those elevators until rationing ended in 1947.

And no president felt, apparently, that an ex-salesman could run an elevator one bit better after reading *The Road To Salesmanship* than before. So Ronald Press exhausted their first printing (of three thousand copies, I believe), produced no more, and the total sale of the book fell at least a million copies short of what they, and I, had expected.

But in much later years this same author wrote some other books, one or two of which became notorious, to say the least. He was accused of accusing various Presidents and Secretaries of State of being very poor Presidents and even worse Secretaries. And quite a number of people began to be curious as to what such a fire-breathing dragon could ever have had to say on so innocuous a subject as salesmanship. This reprint is issued simply to satisfy that curiosity.

Actually, however, we can save you quite a bit of time by telling you what the book says, in effect, right here. It says that the profession and practice of salesmanship are of tremendous practical value to any nation. And that the everyday hardworking salesman should be very proud of the contribution which he and his fellow "knights of the road" make to the prosperity and welfare of their country.

The reasons for this appraisal can themselves be reduced to a concise summarization, which we have stated before on many occasions and in many speeches. Using over-simplification on purpose, let us point out that all economic systems fall basically into two categories. In one system, permeated with the philosophy of abundance, you inevitably have "over-production," *with a million salesmen always trying to move the "too much"*—and converting today's luxuries for the few into tomorrow's necessities for the masses by doing so. In the other, permeated by the philosophy of scarcity, you always have "underproduction," *with a million ration clerks always trying to divide the too little*—and stagnating all progress in raising the standard of living by doing so.

This thin book was written for those who liked salesmen better than ration clerks; who preferred the philosophy of abundance, and what we frequently call "the free enterprise system," even though they understood neither the system itself nor their own very important part in making it work.

And if you insist on reading it even now, you can't say we didn't warn you.

Sincerely,

Robert Welch

PREFACE

In this book we take very little interest in how to make a sale. We are here concerned, instead, with how to become salesmen. The distinction is not only important; it foreshadows, I believe, the essential thought to which these short chapters add up in the end.

For I regard salesmanship not as a trade, but as a profession. In bricklaying or bookbinding the apprentice can be taught a limited number of routine operations, which he may then repeat with increasing skill as practice makes perfect. In law or medicine, however, the practitioner acquires, from training, only the fundamental knowledge and aptitude for his work. He must then solve for himself the individual problems of every set of circumstances, without any blueprints to guide him. He is facing new and different situations every day. His success depends on the diligence and adroitness with which he uses his own mental tools and the resources of his own personality.

A salesman does not require the academic instruction of the doctor or of the lawyer, of course. But neither can he ever conceive of his task as the continuous laying of bricks, each new one the same as the last. In my view there is no memorized procedure to be followed which will not do him more harm than good. To the extent that he attempts to stereotype his work, or to have it stereotyped for him, he will cease to be a salesman and become merely a traveling sample case.

PREFACE

The question, then, is: What can a salesman learn, from the experience of others, which will improve his background and preparation; which will give him a better insight into the requirements of his job? I do not pretend to give an all-inclusive answer. But out of my own nineteen years in sales work I have gathered a number of observations and comments, which are here set forth in as friendly and casual a manner as I can arrive at. I have a sincere feeling of sympathetic kinship with all men who carry order books. My hope is that some few of them, through reading these pages, may find grains of help here and there towards becoming both better and happier salesmen.

R. H. W.

July, 1941.

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**THE ROAD TO
SALESMANSHIP**

CHAPTER 1

WHY ARE SALESMEN?

A man once walked into a large wholesale house in Pittsburgh, asked to see the manager, and announced himself as the world's best salesman. He was very positive about it.

He was so convincing, in fact, that he was hired. The general manager felt that the laws of chance might happen to bring the world's best salesman knocking on their door. And if so, the aforesaid general manager didn't want to be in the position of having slammed the door in the face of such an opportunity. Whereas, if the stranger should prove to be a bluffer and a dud, the firm had very little to lose.

So our manager, his eyes gleaming with secret amusement and with even a faint hope, took the new salesman up to the attic of this wholesale establishment, and there showed him a stock of merchandise which had lain gathering dust for the past two years. He gave the new man samples of this merchandise, a record of its cost, and a free rein to sell it to anybody, without worrying about conflict with their other salesmen; at whatever distance he had to go to sell it, and at any price he could get, so long as the price did not represent an actual loss to the firm. This seemed to be all the instructions necessary for "the world's best salesman"; and the w.b.s. was turned loose, accordingly, to do his stuff, unhampered by prospect lists, sales routes, or daily reports.

Days went by, and the company heard nothing from this new member of their organization. The days became

weeks with still no word, and the episode became a fading memory. But after seven months, when even the general manager had practically forgotten that the "world's best salesman" ever existed, they got a letter from him. It was written from some small town in southern Idaho, and said: "I just can't take it any longer, so I guess I'll have to give up and resign. Sorry to have disappointed you, but I am the world's second best salesman. The world's *best* salesman is the fellow who sold you folks these goods in the first place."

Now, in the following pages we shall not be concerned with the kind of salesman, or of salesmanship, indicated in the above story. My purpose in reciting it is to limit our field; and to illustrate practically everything which salesmanship, as a legitimate part of our industrial and social organization, cannot and should not be expected to do. If the primary purpose of a salesman is, or seems to him to be, to "unload" merchandise—then it's time for him to start looking for a job somewhere else. And the chances are that the firm he is working for will not be there, with any job to give him, very long anyway. If the article or the service which is being offered requires "high pressure" selling, then the chances are very great that the salesman is performing no useful function for the community, and that he probably would do society more good by going on W.P.A. and being fed at public expense. And if the salesman's work is not part of a regularly organized and carefully supervised routine, intimately connected with the usual, frequent, and orderly distribution of merchandise or of services, then he is likely to be a mere hanger-on to our economic system—with no more basic

excuse for the support which he milks from those who perform useful work than the card sharp, the undeserving beggar, or the crooked politician.

A QUESTION AND AN ANSWER

But since the purpose of this book is to try to help men who want to become salesmen, and to help those who already are salesmen to become better ones, it might be wise first to ask and answer the question: What do we really need salesmen for, anyway? Any kind of salesmen?

To reply to this bald heresy, it is not necessary to dive into the deep and murky waters of sociology; but you will have to exercise patience while we wade just a bit in its shallow edges. For there are deserved criticisms which can be raised against the peddlers of nostrums; against the floating ne'er-do-wells who eke the cost of their flops out of the unwary, as eighty per cent commissions on useless "doo-dads" and gadgets; and against the well-groomed athletes who corner friends in clubhouse lockers, to let them in on the ground floor of fly-by-night stocks and sure things which will pay twenty per cent. And we have to bring home the point that such criticisms should never be allowed to include, nor to have any bearing on, orthodox selling.

Let's put our response as bluntly as the question. The man who condemns the profession and practice of salesmanship as a parasitic use of the consumer's money, which would not be necessary nor have any place in some ideal and planned economy, is either a hypocrite or a fool. For the purpose of all regular selling is, by the trial and error method which nature eventually uses despite every effort

of man to repeal its laws, to give distribution to those goods and those services which time and effort can prove to deserve it. Whether or not you like the theory of "survival of the fittest" in biology, it definitely works in the industry of a country where men are free to compete; and salesmanship is one of the main factors which makes it work.

Nearly two generations ago Edward Bellamy wrote a famous book, "Looking Backward." It pictured a society, presumably of the year 2000 A.D., in which there would be no salesmen, no competitive distributing channels, and no rival manufacturers; and in which there would still be available, in every population center throughout this vast country, great warehouses of dresses, shoes, books, pianos, hairpins, and shotguns. These storerooms were to contain, in fact, everything which the human animal might reasonably desire for his comfort and happiness; all manufactured by a paternal government, for which everybody worked without benefit of the profit motive. The book, despite its sale of millions of copies, is almost entirely forgotten today except by the student of sociology. Its ideas were as old as society itself. But to Americans, too busy creating the wealth of homes and farms and factories to be familiar with the psychology of oppressed peoples of the past, these ideas seemed new and startling. They have stayed with us ever since. They have been augmented by the infiltration of somewhat similar ideas which, also dead and forgotten many times in the past, again sprang Phoenix-like as new births from the brains of such modern Europeans as Marx and Engels. And from these roots have grown those hazy conceptions of a government which

provides everything for its citizens, and which would leave no room nor occasion for competing creators and competing organizers to try to sell their wares to the public. Such conceptions have become the mirage towards which the super-liberals, misguided zealots and hypocritical self-seeking demagogues alike, have tried to steer our course.

It does little good to point out to these people the idiocy of their promises, or the undesirability of the world they would give us. They shut their minds to the gross inefficiency, for the very purpose for which it would be designed, of their economic system; against that "free" system in which a man must use every iota of his brains and ability to make his mouse trap better, his wholesale business more efficient, or his service more valuable than that of the other fellow, in order to keep himself and his product from being submerged beneath the waves of something better. Arguments are mostly wasted against the impractical ideologies of men who are completely wrapped up in what could be if human nature were only different; or against the schemes of spellbinders who know that they are feeding the people chimeras in exchange for power.

But actions—and products—still speak louder than words. And the one factor which can retard, and possibly even turn back for a while, the process of socialization, is the continued and increasing creation and offering to the public of warmer clothes, prettier houses, and creamier fish cakes. Cheaper while still better movies in more comfortable and palatial movie houses, faster cars, more powerful radios, and all the grand new inventions and steadily improving older products which tickle the fancy and gratify the acquisitive instinct of man; it is these things,

materialistic if you wish, which the vast army of salesmen tries to make the American people hunger for and strive for, instead of the bread and circuses handed out to idle mobs by politicians. The salesman who today goes out and directly or indirectly convinces John Q. Public that John Q. wants things he hasn't got and things better than he has, to the extent that John Q. is willing to work to get these things, is doing as much as any other class of our society to preserve that American nation of free individuals which most of us wholeheartedly believe in and which is still given lip service even by those who would destroy it.

EIGHT-CYLINDER EXAMPLES

The point I am trying to make in this chapter can probably be made clearer, however, by illustration than by talking like a college text book on political economy. And the automobile is perfect material for our illustration.

There are some few among us who, aspiring to a philosophical outlook on life that is more oriental than occidental, claim to see only spiritual and ultimate loss in the multiplication of man's mechanical servants and toys. They may be right. But we shall ignore their viewpoint here, for at least ninety-nine per cent of those of us now living in this modern western world consider the increasing number of bathtubs, electric toasters, cement roads, mechanical refrigerators, harvesting combines and watches, as contributions to progress. Those who basically disagree with us in the very meaning of progress, as indicated by these trivial manifestations, are in too infinitely small a minority for us to pause for their opinions.

And so to us who find pride and enjoyment "in the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind," the automobile typifies probably better than any other object the progress we have made; in forging the materials nature has provided us, and in harnessing her own omnipresent powers, for the extension of our activities, the increase of our comfort, and the fulfillment of our changing desires. Considering wealth as the sum total of all those material things which man wants and works for, the invention and development of the automobile has instigated the creation of more wealth in a shorter period of time than any other factor within the era of recorded history.

But Henry Ford, Winton and Olds, and all the Detroit pioneers could have invented and improved their horseless carriages until their products would have made even the children of 1941 gasp, without these marvelous machines ever playing one-tenth of the part they have in the industrial and social development of the last generation, if there had not been salesmen to go out and sell the cars. Very few at first, their own number has both pushed up, and paralleled, the tremendously growing production of their wares. They have, for forty years, been going out and creating or encouraging in the minds of their neighbors the desires for a new automobile, a prettier automobile, a faster automobile, a better automobile, an automobile in every family, two automobiles in every family, an automobile for every member of the family; automobiles for everybody, with every auxiliary gadget from cigarette lighter to radio that the engineers back at the factory could devise. These huge corps of salesmen have been

just as important and just as necessary a part of the spread of the automobile—and of all the good roads, farmer and suburban attendance at movies, change in farm work through the use of trucks and tractors, and a thousand other beneficent ramifications which the automobile has brought—as have the inventive and organizing geniuses who have dreamed and guided the physical evolution of the machine itself.

It has been the pressure of competitive salesmanship, subject of course to handicaps and advantages that various companies have faced in the efficiency of other parts of their corporate teamwork, which has caused some cars with greater improvements to find public favor, and their makers the courage and financial reward to go on to greater improvements. While those manufacturers who could not make the grade, and give to their salesmen as good value to offer the public, steadily fell by the wayside. This hard struggle has at no time become a closed book, as the extremely rapid rise of one great company in the later stages of the race amply showed. But it was the sales forces, always and everywhere trying to sell all cars to the public, which gave "survival of the fittest" a chance to work to the fullest extent, and to give to the American people above all others the best in that particular product, the automobile, which the brains, ambition, and previously acquired material resources of American men could develop.

AND A HUNDRED MILLION MORE

It would be only a little more difficult to show how salesmen and salesmanship have played the same part in

the creation and dissemination for wider usefulness of all those adjuncts to comfortable living which give even our laboring classes the highest standard the world has so far known. My own particular field happens to be a very minor one in the industrial scheme of things—candy. But the point I am making is as startlingly well-supported in this field as in that of the automobile. Sweetmeats were concocted by the Romans. Cocoa beans were first used for beverage purposes by the pre-Spanish civilizations of South America, and the manufacture of chocolate from them was originated and developed in Europe. Cocoanuts come from Ceylon, the Philippines, and other points far distant from our shores. Of the vanilla beans, spices, and thousand other ingredients which go to make up confectionery, few are indigenous to America. Yet there is not the least question but what the American public is today offered the widest variety of candy, the best candy, and candy the most ubiquitously and cheaply accessible, of any people in the world. And to my mind, with a fairly thorough acquaintance with the development of the industry, this is due more to the force of salesmanship than to any other factor. Beginning with a few candy kitchens in the early years of the nineteenth century, one factory after another has been started and has sent its representatives out to sell its goods. Candy has been put before the public in one form of retail outlet after another until today there are more than one million stands in the United States where candy can be bought. Simultaneously with this growth of distribution points has grown a taste for sweets until our countrymen now eat more candy per capita than those of any other nation in the world. The

rivalry between the increasing number of manufacturers, with ever larger and better equipped factories, to get all they could of the increasing flow of nickels, dimes, and dollars has been great. It has inevitably led to every improvement any of these manufacturers could evolve in the blending and new uses of ingredients, the appeal of flavors, the cleanliness of their processes, and the value of the product finally offered at retail for the consumer's money. And, I repeat, it is the Knights of the Grip who have gone out on Monday mornings with their display cases, their samples, and their order books, and plugged away at jobbers and retailers until Saturday afternoon, digging out the orders with which they stuff their envelopes to the factory, who have been more responsible than any other class for the fact that you can buy the best candy bar on earth in the smallest village in America if that's what you want for your nickel.

The same story with only slight variations would be true of your favorite soap, your fountain pen, your golf clubs or fishing tackle, the soup which you have for dinner, and the house in which you live. It is the salesmen of America who maintain a steady flow of breakfast foods, reference books, bicycles, bathtubs, cigarettes, and galoshes; and give the public a chance always to pick the best of each according to the public's taste.

CHAPTER 2

WHO ARE SALESMEN?

It is an axiom which, I believe, requires no supporting argument for us Americans, that the middle class is the backbone of any nation. There can never be enough of the very rich to furnish a mass market for the constantly improving products of science and industry which make for material progress and well being. And the poor can only become a market for these products, and have their standards of living raised by their use, after such products have been tried out on the middle class. It is the middle class, with its thrift and stolidity and traditional morals, which furnishes a brake against the too rapid swings of mass psychology. It is the middle class, with its moderate possession of comfortable houses, small neat lawns, pianos, and summer cottages, which furnishes the incentive to the poorer workman to acquire a similar comfort and a similar measure of security for himself and his family. History shows nothing more clearly than that without a large and happy middle class any society, no matter how strongly supported its government may be by brute force, is sitting on a powder keg of revolution which may blow up at any time. Our country has so far weathered the social storm, which has recently engulfed so much of the rest of our western world, largely because of the pride of peaceful possession and the common sense of its middle class.

And while I do not go the next step and contend that the salesmen of America are the backbone of that middle

class, certainly the hundreds of thousands of salesmen and their families constitute one of the solidest and most sensible segments of that estate. A salesman usually has a pretty good idea of how much work and sweat his boss or the management of his company has had to put into trying to produce the article he is selling in the most economical and efficient way possible. He knows what tremendous effort has gone into making that article better and better, while still staying within the restraining bonds of competitive expense, because he himself is usually the one who has been shouting loudest to have the improvement made. He knows too much, therefore, about the difficulties and intricacies of modern industrial production to listen with any patience to some half-wit who believes that all similar articles could be turned out more cheaply for the public, and of better quality, by merely turning over a government-built factory to a bunch of political appointees to sit and watch the wheels go round.

There are idealists, usually without industrial or commercial experience, who seem to think that all that is required in a mechanical world to turn out roller skates, store hats, soft drinks, base cellos, cameras, and plumbing equipment, is to pour the right raw materials into the hopper at one end of a factory floor and watch the finished article come out at the other end. But the salesman instinctively knows better. And because he is accustomed to meeting and arguing with people, he is more likely to speak up and condemn such pseudo-liberal nonsense than other members of the community who also recognize its fallacies, but let it pass in silence.

ON THEIR OWN TWO FEET

But for all the attempt I have been making to write generalizations about salesmen, they do not fit into either generalization or classification very easily. Your salesman, by his very nature, is an individualist; a man with a personality and an outlook of his own. Otherwise he would be no good and would not last long as a salesman.

These individuals together, however, do comprise one great group of our white-collar population; not so clearly identified as our doctors, not so self-confident as our lawyers, not usually as well educated as our teachers; *but playing equally as important a rôle as any of the three.* The salesman cannot bury his mistakes as the doctor is reputed to do, but has to report them to the home office. He cannot appeal them, as the lawyer does, because his customer has already bought from somebody else. He cannot blame them on the parents as the teacher blames the classroom failures, because his sales manager is not interested in alibis, but results and orders. So the salesman, continuously relying on his own resources, his enthusiasm, and the good old law of averages, has to face the world as it is every day; and keep on turning in proofs that he has faced it successfully. Orders are all that count.

In the candy business we are all familiar with the gag about the new salesman who started to work in July. The first several days he sent in nightly reports, devoid of tangible results but with voluminous and detailed explanations as to why this jobber would not buy, and that jobber wouldn't buy, because of the heat. In one buyer's place it had been ninety-eight degrees, even in the office.

In another wholesale house the buyer's collar had melted right in the course of his conversation with our salesman. In driving from one town to another this salesman's radiator had boiled over from the heat. And the next morning he had found that his samples were all completely melted and had to be thrown away. This went on for several pages daily, until on Saturday the sales manager wrote a curt note as follows:

Dear Mr. Jones:

We are not interested in weather reports. We get them out of the daily papers.

What we are interested in is orders.

Very truly yours,

The Boss

There is undoubtedly some similar story in every industry, annihilating at one swoop the basic alibi most prevalent among untrained men in that business. Alibis don't count. For salesmen, as for theatrical people, the show must go on.

And so, I repeat, the men who sell our goods are deserving of all credit. In such cities as Syracuse, N. Y. and Columbus, Ohio, which are centers of territories that are natural sales units, you will find an unusual concentration of salesmen, for all lines, and their families. That they form an excellent stratum of any community is at least partly indicated by the excellent residential advantages of these two cities. Nowhere in the country will you find neater suburban streets, happier middle class homes, or cities spoken of more highly and lovingly by the people who live in them. And scattered throughout America are at least one million such families, a much larger division of

our industrial population than is usually recognized, supported by a million hardworking salesmen. Without them all our giant corporations and huge factories of mass production would be just so many day dreams.

CHAPTER 3

FUNDAMENTALS

After two chapters of introduction, however, or of laying out the carpet on which we are to do our work, it is now undoubtedly time to get down to brass tacks, and start driving them in. Which means, to be of some possible help in telling you how to earn more and larger pay checks, as salesmen. And unfortunately there are not, to my mind, any formulas for making sales; nor any abracadabras or magic phrases for enticing signatures onto dotted lines; nor any rules for "learning salesmanship in ten easy lessons." I have heard of "dissecting a sale," as though it were a stuffed fish; and taking an X-ray picture of "the approach," "the closing," and all the other component parts. Personally, I had just as soon try to sew a button on a cloud of cigarette smoke.

In the game of chess there are some three hundred recognized openings. This means there are three hundred combinations of starting moves; which combinations have been analyzed, played, and tested, until the quality of the middle game to which each will lead is quite well known. And so, many a studious beginner at chess will memorize a number of these openings, and always play as far as possible into a game "by book," feeling that so long as he "follows the book," his moves must be right. Actually, unless he has studied deeply into a particular opening, learned the reasons why certain moves are played in a certain sequence, and made those reasons his own by a thor-

ough understanding, he has merely wasted his time and cluttered up his memory with useless forms and ceremonial. He will never, by any such process, become a chess player. And it seems to me equally certain that nobody will ever be able to sell by "book moves." That is, by following any hocus-pocus which prescribes the details of the right ways for him to hold his hat and the right words to use, as he applies routine No. 43 to the situation and the personalities at hand. Salesmanship, like life—and even chess—is too infinitely complex and comprehensive to permit of any such codification.

The title of this book might well be: *There Are No Short Cuts To Salesmanship*. For the very essence of good salesmanship is that it is a total of numberless contributions of character, of industry, and of able thinking, manifested in numberless little ways. The job of salesmanship varies with every day, with every article sold, and with every call made. The profession, by the very diversity of the difficulties faced, enables almost any man to utilize, much more than such specialized occupations as dentistry or accounting, all of the capabilities with which nature has endowed him. The extent to which he uses all the talents that are his determine how good and how successful a salesman he becomes.

But just as the English and American common law, an uncoded and bewildering mass of the most heterogeneous material, owes its value as the greatest legal system in the world to the fact that every page of every case flows from and has its roots in past experience; so even salesmanship as a serviceable art is now entirely based in daily practice on what experience in the past has shown to be

most practicable, efficient, and worthwhile. To the extent that you learn from and benefit by gleanings from this body of experience, your work as a salesman will become both easier and more successful. It is my hope, largely by anecdote and illustration, to give at least some summarized insight into a few fundamentals that generations of other salesmen have learned. As Tennyson speaks of himself being "the heir of all the ages" you certainly should, through the benefit of their experience, become the heir of all those who have carried an order book before you. And this means learning the spirit, with small concern for the ritual, of successful salesmanship.

DOES ANYBODY BELIEVE YOU?

The first principle is the copybook maxim which might be expected. Tell the truth. It's as simple as that. And unless you have the character and the sense to tell the truth, so consistently and so religiously that people will invariably believe you are telling the truth, you will eventually wind up behind the eight ball in salesmanship, as surely as somebody made little apples. More embryo salesmen make the mistake of disbelieving or disregarding this principle than fail in any other way. And the lack of ultimate success which is inevitable, if this requirement is not met, is so frequently ascribed to other causes, even by the victim himself, that the importance of the precept is constantly and terrifically underestimated.

I know a man in Chicago who is one of the three or four best salesmen I have ever seen—except for this one factor. He is ambitious, and willing to work night and day. He not only has good physical strength, a good appearance, and

the ability to meet and ingratiate himself with all kinds of people, but he has considerably better than an average mind. He does not follow a rut at all, but is capable of engaging in constructive thinking which is frequently valuable to the firm which employs him. He enjoys close association with the ranking officials of this many-million-dollar corporation, because several of them have used him for years as a glorified office boy, in the hope of eventually developing him into an able executive. But most of his work, and all of his real opportunities, have been in sales; special assignments, development of particular markets, or even sales management or sales promotion of small subsidiary divisions, allotted to him partly because of the chance it would give him personally to make good. But his attitude towards veracity is exactly that of the old darky who got into the worst mix-up and tightest squeeze of his life. The old darky was so bewildered he could not think of any possible way to wiggle himself out of the scrape, and so he finally said : "Boss, I'se gwine try somethin' I ain't never tried before. This is one time I'se gwine tell the truth." The only difference is, our Chicago man has never yet reached a situation so serious that he thought it required such an unbelievable gamble.

This specimen is without question the biggest and readiest liar I have ever met. It doesn't even seem to occur to him that the truth might be the natural answer to any question, or have certain basic advantages. Whatever he may be asked by any customer at any time, he merely asks himself what answer or what story would please the customer best or seem to fit the circumstances best at that particular instant. And the consequence is that this man,

who might easily be making ten thousand dollars a year today as the head of a sales group in his own company, is still just a stooge being shifted around by three or four vice-presidents. He blames his own lack of progress on the politics of the organization, without realizing that his final worth to his superiors, which has kept him there at all, is a certain usefulness for office politics of a man in whose word nobody has any confidence. And my chief point is that this fellow, through his other abilities, can, and still does, make a living despite his lack of truthfulness; but that he has never been able to get to first base in salesmanship without it.

You will see many salesmen making calls who are careless with the truth. This carelessness runs all the way from exaggeration of the merits of their products, and false assurances as to the service the house can give, to deliberate and insidious falsehoods about competitors. And it would be blatantly foolish to deny that whatever the falsehood is, there are occasions when it works. But if you want to take years of your life to find out instead of taking my word for it, and will keep tabs on these individual salesmen who are using these means to aid them in getting sales, you will find in the course of time that some of them cannot call on certain good customers because of money they have borrowed. If they are still salesmen at all they have changed jobs or lines several times and are frequently looking for new connections. They usually talk loud about the big orders they are taking, but are covering their trade by riding in somebody else's car, and outfumble you when it comes time to pick up a lunch check. In the end you will invariably find that poor John So-And-So and poor Sam

This-And-That are living with their wives' relatives, and hanging around street corners telling other loafers how they used to help the boss run his business.

There is no vocation in the world in which truth is so important as salesmanship; because there is no other calling in which every daily contribution to a man's success depends so much on the confidence which other men may have in what he tells them.

NO METAPHYSICS REQUIRED

One word of caution is desirable, however, for those of a captious nature; and it can be given best in several hundred words of illustration.

A clothing manufacturer in New York once called in his star salesman, and gave him for a sample suit of clothes; a new product which was the manufacturer's pride and joy. "For many years, Sam," Mr. Finkelbaum told his salesman, "you have been wanting we should give you a suit so good it wouldn't have no competition; not even should your most chiselling customers say they had ever seen any value like it. Here's the suit. This is the kind of opportunity that every salesman, whatever line he's got, prays for once in a life time yet. This suit they can sell at retail for about thirty dollars. Is really worth sixty, at least. Your wholesale price is eighteen. But listen, Sam, I'm warning you that eighteen dollars is the bottom price. We sharpened pencils to the eraser already, and we even forgot there was such a thing as overhead when we figured this suit. Everything has been taken out of the cost which possibly could be taken out, and eighteen dollars, I'm telling you, Sam, is the absolute bottom price. And don't forget it."

So Sam took the suit and started on his trip. His first call was at the Blank Department Store in Philadelphia. "Yes," said the buyer, "that's a marvelous suit, Sam. In fact, we could sell five thousand of them at the right price. But I have just been doing some figuring here, and the most we could pay for that purpose would be seventeen dollars. So what about it?"

"No can do," Sam replied. And he went on to explain what the boss had told him about eighteen dollars really being the absolute bottom on this particular piece of goods.

"Well, maybe so," the buyer said. "But wire your boss and find out. It can't do any harm to ask."

Sam reluctantly wired, as requested, and the telegraphic answer came back immediately: "Accept the offer."

So Sam went on to Baltimore. And he ran up against a similar situation, and the buyer was willing to take six thousand suits. Except that the top price this buyer could and would pay was sixteen dollars.

"That's out," Sam told him. "Frankly, I think it might be possible to get the price down from eighteen dollars to seventeen." And he then explained what had happened in Philadelphia. "But," he continued, "I know how closely this suit was figured in the first place, and I know that seventeen dollars is bound to be the absolute bottom. I think I might be able to get you, also, that price, but I know it is the best I could do."

The Baltimore buyer, however, was adamant. "Sixteen dollars," he said, "or nothing. Wire your boss and find out. It can't do any harm."

With some misgivings as to whether or not he might get fired, Sam nevertheless wired what had happened. And

the telegraphic reply came back immediately: "Accept the offer."

In Pittsburgh Sam ran into the same kettle of fish, except that the price offered was fifteen dollars and fifty cents for seven thousand suits. And despite Sam's recountal of his reasons for knowing that sixteen dollars was the absolute bottom, the Pittsburgh buyer insisted on Sam wiring in this offer of fifteen dollars and a half. The telegraphic reply came back promptly: "Accept the offer."

In Cleveland history repeated itself; and the offer of the Cleveland department store of fifteen dollars each for eight thousand suits was immediately accepted by a telegram from the house. But in Cleveland, on the way back to his hotel, Sam was in an automobile accident, and fatally injured. They took him to the hospital, and immediately telegraphed his company. The boss, who valued Sam both as a good friend and as a salesman, immediately took a plane to Cleveland. He arrived at the hospital while Sam was still conscious and began to pour out his sympathy and regrets.

"Never mind that, Mr. Finkelbaum," Sam told him. "They got me and there's nothing I can do about it. I'm checking out, I know it, and there's no use your kidding me or my kidding myself. But as a dying request, there is one favor I should like to ask of you. A big favor."

"Anything! Positively anything, Sam," Mr. Finkelbaum assured him. "Anything in the world I can do for you, just say the word. What is this big favor?"

"Before I die," Sam said solemnly, "tell me truthfully one thing. What is the absolute bottom price on those suits?"

This is a long-winded yarn to bring out a simple point, that the telling of actual truth on the part of a salesman may not always depend on him. It does not need to. Sam was telling the truth as he knew and believed it, at every point where he called; and that was all any buyer could expect of him. Most business houses scrupulously arm their salesmen with all the true facts and the essential figures concerning the products which they sell. But in any event there is no demand on the integrity of a salesman that he spend his time delving into encyclopaedias or accounting systems, to verify the ordinary facts related to him by the management about his products. It is enough to report them as being given to him by his superiors. In other words, this fundamental virtue does not call for any philosophical questing into the problem of "What is truth?"

I have raised this minor warning because there are some pure souls who, in their youthful enthusiasm for the absolute, waste their energies and wear themselves to a mental frazzle in a wish never to make any statement which, by any amount of extensive research, could be shown to be unfounded by one hundred per cent fact. The type is rare, but I have seen it. And I am belaboring the point, perhaps, because I wish to bring out that the practice of truthfulness is no metaphysical proceeding, but a matter of elementary mental honesty. The job is to be yourself. Naturally, easily, and without any necessity for self-questioning, tell the truth as you see it. When your customers become convinced, by intuitive appraisal and by experience, that you are always telling the truth, you will already have gone a considerable distance towards becoming a highly successful salesman.

CHAPTER 4

MORE FUNDAMENTALS

Basically, a cream center, such as you bite into in a box of chocolates, is composed of just three ingredients. These are sugar, corn syrup, and flavoring. This base may be doctored by various substances which act as chemical agents, it may be dressed up by artificial color, and it may be full of nutmeats which have been added. But if you will take eighty pounds of sugar and twenty pounds of corn syrup, cook them to about 242° Fahrenheit, let the mixture cool on a slab, then work it up into a set mass which soon jellies itself back down, and add the proper amount of the flavoring desired, you will have a cream center. Then, to give it commercial value, you need to enclose it in a coating of chocolate.

This cream center makes a fairly useful analogy for discussing the ingredients of salesmanship. We have discussed truthfulness, which corresponds to the twenty pounds of corn syrup, first. It serves as a control on the tendency of the sugar to remain, or even after cooking to become again, just sugar; instead of the finer-grained cream which is evolved from the combination of the two elements. Its action and value is not quite so obvious to the public as is the purpose of that heaviest ingredient, sugar, which is seen everywhere being used in so many mixtures.

But the eighty pounds of sugar costs the most, and weighs the most, nevertheless. And its counterpart in

salesmanship is work. Just plain, ordinary hard work; a commonplace ingredient, like the sugar, and just as familiar in daily life. There may be smart ways of making a living in which work is not important; just as there are a few trick kinds of candy which require very little sugar. But salesmanship and chocolate creams, to be any good, require a willingness to work, and granulated sugar, in about the same respective proportions. And that proportion is decidedly a large one.

NO BED OF ROSES

There is only one labor union of salesmen that I know about in the United States. That is a comparatively small group in New York City. And while there may be others, it is certain that the average union leader and organizer would go nutty trying to compress the individualistic schedules of salesmen into his orthodox limits. For one thing, the salesman has to make his calls at times when he can see his customers. And in many fields this means at ungodly hours of day and night.

The very fact that the salesman thus is and usually must be the master of his own time has led to many hilarious stories of masterful loafing. There was the fairly recent cartoon, for instance, of the salesman telephoning from a warm and luxurious bed near which stood a clock pointing to 10:30 A.M. "Boss," he was saying, "I'm at Smith's office now and Mr. Smith won't be back for an hour yet. Don't you think I had better wait?" And there is the story of the salesman who hung around his hotel until nine-thirty in the morning because he just had to see some mail from his office before he could go out properly equipped for the

day's calls. By the time he had received and digested this mail it was ten-thirty and he decided it was too late to make any calls before lunch and he might as well have his lunch first. Before he finished that lunch two other salesmen came back to the hotel for theirs and the three got into such an interesting discussion of business conditions as they were finding them that before the whole party finally left the lunch table it was two-thirty in the afternoon. Our particular salesman then remembered that it would **take him** over an hour to drive to his first and most **important call**; which would bring it to about four o'clock, and **that the** buyer would almost certainly have gone home by that time. He decided, therefore, it was no use wasting gasoline making that trip for nothing, and that it would be better anyway to get in the call the first thing in the morning when he himself would be fresh as a daisy. So, for the best interests of the company, he called it a day and went over to the pool room.

Where there is so much smoke, somebody has undoubtedly been burning something. But I'll bet you our national debt against a handful of Russian rubles that the subjects of that cartoon and that story were both looking for other lines within six months of the incidents recorded. And as against these fictitious slams on the industry of salesmen I'd like to deter the weak in heart from ever undertaking this means of making a living by telling you an entirely true and unexaggerated story of a week I spent with another type of salesman.

Clem had been working for us several years and kept reminding me many times every year of an unwary promise I had made to spend a few days with him calling on his

customers. So finally I gave in and met him one Sunday night in Buffalo. When we went to bed it was arranged that we were to meet in the hotel lobby at six-thirty in the morning. It is natural for salesmen, when they snare their sales managers into going along, to stretch themselves a bit and put up a good showing as to the hours they spend on the job. So I was neither surprised nor alarmed at this ambition. But it seemed that I had just closed my eyes to go to sleep when the telephone rang. "Good morning," chirruped the overcheerful voice. "It's six o'clock." And when I stepped off the elevator promptly at six-thirty, I found Clem sitting in the biggest easy chair in the lobby, calmly reading his newspaper.

"Say," he hopped up at once, "do you mind making a couple of calls before breakfast? We may miss these fellows, as they will be away on their own daily routes, if we don't catch them early. And I have already got the car at the side door."

We made both calls. We grabbed a cup of coffee and some doughnuts at a lunch cart and made another call. And another. By twelve-thirty my tongue was hanging out. At one o'clock we hesitated for lunch. I had three hamburger sandwiches and a Coca Cola. Clem had three Coca Colas and a hamburger sandwich. Then we dashed off again to catch some customer who could only be seen once a month at ten minutes to two on that particular afternoon.

At seven o'clock Clem admitted that it was time for dinner and that it might be nice to eat the dinner sitting down. He took me to a chop house where we had some excellent thick steaks. But Clem finished his steak before

I did and seemed to be getting nervous. "Relax, you old war-horse," I told him. "The day is done—and so am I. What are you fidgeting about?"

"Well," he confessed sheepishly, "there's a couple of calls we could make now if you'd just as soon."

We made 'em. Three in fact, in three different parts of the city. By then it was ten o'clock. "Now what about a game of billiards?" said Clem. I agreed. We won a game each. Some clock was striking eleven when we got back into the car and started—in the opposite direction from the hotel.

"Didn't think you'd mind," Clem explained. "This fellow works his trade in the evenings and doesn't get home until about eleven-thirty. That's why I stayed out in this part of the city for the billiards."

At eleven-forty-five we got a small order from the night bird. At twelve-fifteen we had put the car up and were back in the hotel. At half past twelve we said good night at the door of my room. "Clem," I confessed, "I am going to bed." "Me too," Clem agreed. "Just as soon as I write up these orders and mail 'em. We've got a couple of early calls in the morning so I'll see you in the lobby at six-thirty. Good night."

It seemed that I had just closed my eyes to go to sleep when the telephone—pardon me, this is where you came in. And the program didn't change. What's more, I found out that it was not a special program, put on just for my benefit. The timing of our calls dovetailed in too well with the habits of the many different customers for this to have been an unrehearsed performance. In order to get his calls in Clem was actually working this way during the one week

of every month he was in Buffalo. And the other three weeks of his regular monthly routine seemed easier only by such a strenuous comparison; in the same way that a grizzly bear looks puny when you put him beside an elephant.

THE LAW OF AVERAGES

Now this book is not intended as any crusade towards making salesmen work eighteen hours a day, or twelve either. The best procedure lies somewhere between that of the man who was going to wait and be fresh as a daisy, and of my good friend Clem who was as wilted as a husband's alibi by the time he made his last evening calls. But it is much better and much safer to err on the side of too much work. For every successful salesman carries around with him one continuous thought: If you don't see 'em, you can't sell 'em!

In fact, if you will let me forget about chocolate creams and mix my figures of speech a bit, every other factor in selling but this one is what the algebraists would call a variable. Some days buyers seem to be in a good mood, some days in a bad one. Some seasons your samples and prices appear to put you ahead of competition, and some seasons behind it. Some weeks you seem to be inspired, and to fill your order book with as much ease as Kreisler plays the fiddle; others, you sweat and struggle like a ten-year-old girl at her first lessons on the violin—and with about the same results so far as orders are concerned. But running as a steady constant through all this interplay of variables is one absolute and reassuring ratio; other things being equal, or when the other factors are all averaged up

over a period of time, the number of sales you have put under your belt will be in proportion to the number of calls you have made.

And while there may be geniuses in sales work so brilliant, and with such overwhelming personalities, that they can dash off such big deals in two or three hours a day as to keep themselves way up ahead of the flock, and who do not need to slave and plod as the rest of us poor mortals, I have never seen them. Among the thousand salesmen that I have met and known personally, the successful ones were in every case hard and steady workers. This may still be the effect of chance. The "thousand and oneth" salesman I meet may turn out to be the exception to this rule. But even then the probability for brilliance versus consistent plugging seems to be a very long shot for anybody to gamble his life on.

CHAPTER 5

FINAL FUNDAMENTALS

But let's assume that you do not go in for hunting the tricky and easier ways. That instead of trying to make seventy-nine pounds of starch and a pound of saccharine do the job, you follow the regular hard and tried method, and put a full eighty pounds of sugar into your batch. Which is the work. And you put twenty pounds of the best grade of corn syrup. Which is the confidence-inspiring truthfulness. You still haven't got anything when you get through but just a mass of rather tasteless fondant. Or, in the parallel of salesmanship, just the base out of which something worth while can be made.

The third ingredient, which gives your fondant tastefulness and converts it into a cream center, is flavoring. And the third ingredient which converts the combination of two such simple elements as hard work and truthfulness into salesmanship, which keeps this weighty base of salesmanship from being flat and of little value, is a liking for your customers.

Having (I hope) inculcated some slight suspicion in your mind that truthfulness and steady work are prerequisites to earning even beans at selling things, I wish to be equally emphatic that to earn a little bacon as well, you must like and have a friendly feeling towards your customers. For as surely as Newton's apple fell down instead of up, unless you do have a genuine liking and friendship for the individuals on whom you call, they will not really

have a sincere liking for you. And without each of your individual customers feeling that you are honestly his friend, aside from business, you will never become a great salesman nor even a good one.

It seems to me that one of the worst and most frequent mistakes of the usual beginners in sales work is to go at this problem backwards. They have an idea that it is a part of their job—but definitely a task nevertheless—to ingratiate themselves with the buyers on whom they call; to make buyers like them. But so long as this is thought of as a task, every move and mannerism for that purpose has an artificiality, no matter how cleverly disguised, that handicaps its effectiveness. It is so much easier and more direct to call on a man with the idea that you like him, that you are really his friend and want to do what is for his best interests; and not to have any conscious worry as to whether he likes you or not. Nothing is so reciprocal as friendship, and it is as definite as the sum of two and two that if you concentrate on what a fine fellow your customer is at heart, in the midst of his own problems and worries and outlook on life, and despite the particular faults and shortcomings of human nature manifested in him, he will inevitably be thinking of what a fine fellow you are, and of how much he likes to give you business.

I am no Pollyanna pest. Leibnitz's "Everything is for the best in this the best of all possible worlds" leaves me as cold as it did Voltaire. "There is so much good in the worst of us and so much bad in the best of us, that it little behooves any of us to find much fault with the rest of us," is no summarization of my opinions on my fellow men. I find plenty to criticize about everybody I meet except myself;

and occasionally I am not even sure about me. But it is very easy to like a person, and have a genuine feeling of friendship for him, while still wanting to tell him that he has halitosis, or treats his wife very selfishly, or you wish he would use less profanity. In fact it seems to me that it is those whom we know and like best that we are most inclined to criticize in our own minds. We are usually able to "see no evil, hear no evil" concerning only those people in whom we take no personal interest.

Nor do I believe that any difficult self-discipline and determination is at all necessary to achieve this feeling of friendship for the various men who give you, or might give you, orders. If psychology is a science as applied to salesmanship, it is over my head, but we'll dip into that field just this once to point out, what your own experience will readily show you, that the best way to get A to like B is to have A do B a favor. In plain language, to whatever extent you yourself can do favors to your customer, prove helpful to him in even the littlest ways, or take a genuine interest in his welfare and progress, even when there is no opportunity to translate that interest into acts; to whatever extent you can thus think about and assume some mental responsibility for his well-being and progress, to that same extent will you come to like that customer and feel that he is really your friend.

And when you yourself have come to feel this genuine friendship for nine-tenths of the individual customers in your territory, you do not need to worry about whether any of them likes you or not. All the rest will follow as the night the day.

JAILBIRDS NOT WANTED

It is to be noted that no reference has been made here, except by inference, to such characteristics as honesty, loyalty, and decent personal habits of living. These things are assumed, not alone for sales work, but for satisfactory endeavor in any field. They deserve no encomiums, as they are entirely expected and assumed by every responsible company of *all* its employees. If you cannot keep from spending the firm's money to pay your own bills; if you have no inner feeling of loyalty and support for the management and the team of which you are a part; or if you are hauled away to the police station one night a week for getting drunk and beating up your wife so all the neighbors can hear you; then even if you can sell the proverbial refrigerator to Eskimos, or chocolate bars to Hershey, no sales manager is in the least interested in having you on his force. Nor would any university want you for a professor, however brilliant a scholar you might be; nor any contractor for laying bricks, however many more bricks you might be able to lay than any two men about you. Those things go without saying, and we have not wasted time on them here.

But assuming the lack of unforgivable vices, I have tried to point out the three fundamental virtues which can make any man of normal physical strength and appearance, and of normal intelligence, a valuable asset and a permanent well-paid member of anybody's sales force. If you can always stick to the truth, even when the going is hard; if you can keep on working when your buddies want you to take an afternoon off to see the Red Sox play the Yankees; and

if you can do your work every day with the idea that you are calling on friends for whom you would like to show and prove your friendship; then the world may not be yours, as Kipling so glibly promised, but you can be sure that a comfortable home and a happy life, paid for by the sales checks of a company that's proud of you, will be.

CHAPTER 6

ADAPTATION

One of the most frequent paeans of praise that we hear about the man who brings home the orders is that he is a born salesman. It is not my intention here to go into the old argument as to the relative effects of heredity and training on a man's character and powers. But I am quite sure, nevertheless, that to pass off a man's success at selling goods with the left-handed compliment that he is a born salesman is to give too much weight to his inspiration in picking his parents, and too little weight to his own perspiration in learning how to sell.

Any subject and any work is simple and easy for us to the extent that we understand it. The born mathematician is invariably the man who, through a good teacher, interested parents, or his own persistence, was given an excellent grasp of the very first steps in his mathematical studies. From that point on, each succeeding step seemed easy, because he had the thorough foundation to make it easy. And eventually such a man, unless pulled aside into other fields by circumstances or by an even more thorough understanding of other subjects, becomes a "born" mathematician.

It is my experience that a little delving into personal history will always show the same to be true of the "born" musician or the "born" tennis player or the "born" explorer. And in almost every case the same man, if his bent had been directed with the same enthusiasm and the same

amount of thorough grounding in preliminary knowledge or familiarity with the material, could and would have become equally adept in some other line. There is no truer summarization and interpretation of the miracle of greatness, as shown by achievement in any steady field of endeavor, than that "genius is the capacity for taking infinite pains." The extent to which a man has trained himself to think objectively about every detail of his work, rather than any artistic temperament or any divinely special aptitude therefor, will usually be an accurate measure of his success in that work—whether it be leading a symphony orchestra or selling gum drops to candy jobbers.

It is my thesis, therefore, that practically any young man, again assuming normal physical appearance and normal intelligence, who wants to go into sales work, can become a success at it if he has the stuff to become a success at anything else. I particularly frown on the thought sometimes met with that there is any mystery in salesmanship or that you have to have the knack for it. The only thing you have to have, so far as I can figure out, and assuming the three fundamental virtues previously outlined, is ordinary sincerity, or the ability to be yourself. If you like to pose, or to pretend, try out for the movies; you have no business carrying a sample case. If you like to imitate others, perhaps Major Bowes can give you the proper start to fame and fortune. But if the man you take in to every office and salesroom, house, or store, to make your call, is honestly you yourself; then that real you will be as likely to make worthwhile progress in sales work as in anything else to which your own particular "capacity for taking pains" is applied.

MOCKING BIRDS CAN'T ARGUE

It is readily realized that spontaneity is a very valuable and effective characteristic in the sales approach and in all sales conversations. But there is nothing magical about spontaneity. It is merely one manifestation of being yourself. The one which I like best of all the stories concerning salesmen is about the very green and frightened, but ambitious and likable, young man who was making his first call. He had been carefully trained and rehearsed by a high-pressure sales manager, who didn't trust his salesmen to organize and put into their own words arguments as logically arranged and convincing as could be done for them beforehand at the home office. And so this young salesman, having finally succeeded in getting into the office of the business man who was the first prospect on his list, and having got the undivided attention of that business man as the matter of common courtesy which is to be expected, began to spout his memorized exposition. **He had been** talking monotonously and without a break, for about five minutes, when he suddenly lost himself in the middle of a sentence, and turned red in the face; while stage fright scared the rest of his speech completely out of his mind. He blushed terribly for a few seconds, then broke into a broad smile, and said: "And if you're going to buy, Mister, you'll have to buy right now, because I've forgotten the rest of it."

The story is given a happy ending by the announcement that the boy got his order; and in my case he certainly would have got it if what he was selling had been anything I could use to advantage. For here was spontaneity of the

most pleasing sort in the very face of parrotism. This young man was saved, in a most difficult situation, by being his natural self. It's all you need in any situation. Improve that self, if you can and want to, but *be it* all of the time. Or for those who like their maxims dressed up in a classical quotation, a most sound ambition is "esse quam videre"—"to be, rather than to seem."

And the problem of this young man for his subsequent calls was very plain. It is one which is met with, in a less fixed and arbitrary form, in every division of selling. That problem was to use every argument his sales manager had given him, and even the advantage of the carefully studied logical arrangement of these arguments; but by thorough understanding to make them his own. Assuming that he was selling worthwhile merchandise or service, which is the only kind of selling we are talking about, the chances are that in studying his products, and all he knew, could learn, and thought about them, he would come to the point where, in trying to tell another man of these products, he would use practically the same thoughts and arguments as had been provided for him by his sales manager. But by such a course of thinking and study, he would have made these arguments his own, so that they would flow naturally and spontaneously from him, regardless of interruptions or when met by counter-arguments, instead of as a memorized presentation which would be sunk by the first rebuttal.

The words put into your mouth by the house for which you are working are frequently far better than those you can devise—but only if you think so. Study them out until you feel them, see them, believe them, and can talk them as your own arguments. They will then probably be, unless

you have very exceptional ability, your own *best* arguments.

But it is to be noted in all of this that there is no question of a special adaptation. Sincerity is all that is required.

YOU ARE NOT PROPOSING MARRIAGE

I purposely referred to the young man in the above story as being bashful, for a great many of the best young men, in starting out and in picking their vocations in life, feel that they are handicapped by a bashfulness which others do not have. They feel that there is naturally in other young men they see a knack for easily facing people, even strangers, which is a blessing they lack. I should like to assure all such young men, who are otherwise earnest and ambitious, that this is the sheerest nonsense, for more reasons than one. This knack, as they call it, when it really is present, and not covered up by self-discipline and determination to hide inward trepidation, is too often merely a brazen effrontery which does its possessor a great deal more harm than good. Actually, it is as natural as cutting teeth, first wearing long pants, having to shave, and beginning to like the girls, for a young man who has been trained with the normal and proper respect for the greater experience, if not the superior intelligence, of his elders, to have that feeling of trepidation when he first begins to approach grown men, already established in business, on an equal footing. One of the best, and eventually hardest, salesmen I have ever known, confessed to me that the first morning he was ever given a sample case and sent out to make the first call, he walked around the block of his customer's office nine times; pausing at the door each time and then walk-

ing around once more, before he ever got the courage to go in. And I myself, who have at least been making my living in sales work for nearly twenty years, can assure you that this feeling of stage fright stayed with me, as a prelude to every call, for a long time; gradually diminishing but not entirely disappearing, as something I had wilfully to overcome, for several years.

For those who are determined, despite this "bashfulness," to become salesmen, and who would like therefore to overcome these fears as definitely and as rapidly as possible, it will be a help to keep certain things constantly in mind. One is that the average business man may bark, but doesn't bite. Whether he is running a drug store, a jobbing establishment, or a factory, his own business ultimately depends on the things he buys; and he is an utter fool, uncommonly blind to his own interests, if he is not willing to give such courteous treatment to salesmen as to have them all like to call at his place of business. Otherwise he will not be offered, or have the opportunity of seeing, all the products he might like or need to see, in order to select those which he can use to best advantage. And in the rare case where a buyer is so blind to his own best interest as to be uncourteous, unreasonable, or profane, it will still help to remember the old boyhood rhyme that "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me." I have never heard of a salesman being bodily thrown out of a buyer's office, despite jokes to the contrary, and despite a few contacts with obnoxious pressure-artists whom I personally would have liked to throw out. And I have never heard of profanity so severe that it could break a man's arm or even scratch his finger. You can always wash out of

your mind an unpleasant call, if the unpleasantness was through no fault of yours, with the thought that there are other calls ahead.

Another antidote to stage fright is the democratic recollection that, still in this country at least, you are legally and socially just as good and entitled to as much respect as the veriest tycoon on whom you may be calling. The chances are about even that you have as much brains. The only place where he is likely to have actual superiority, which merits respect, is in experience. Have respect for that experience, but no fear; for the more experience he has had, the more approachable he will be.

A comparatively young reporter, who had cut his eye-teeth all right but still had a natural veneration for greatness or position, was assigned some years ago by his newspaper to a personal interview which had been promised by President Roosevelt. The managing editor thought that this reporter would be overwhelmed with delight at the assignment. Instead, the time had almost arrived to leave for Washington, with the reporter still moping around the office looking as though he had lost his way home and didn't have a nickel to telephone for somebody to come and get him. The managing editor, worried, called the reporter into his office and discovered that this smart young fellow was actually scared to death at the idea of meeting, asking questions of, and talking face to face with, the President of the United States.

"Listen, Pete," the editor told him, "snap out of it and use your head. Just remember that Roosevelt scratches between his toes every time he takes off his socks, the same as you and me." It is well for the apprentice and non-

veteran salesman to remember also that his customers all scratch themselves when they itch, the same as he does, and are just as human.

CARVE OUT YOUR OWN "GOOD LUCK"

Aside from achieving spontaneity and sincerity, and overcoming bashfulness, there are any number of less psychic steps of progress in the self development of an "unadapted salesman." The organization of his work is probably the most important. On the surface some people seem just naturally to know how to get the best results out of the least physical effort, and others do not. But this splendid ratio of results to effort, whether it be in finding the proper proportion of buyers in, at the time calls are made; or in always having the exact samples in which a particular buyer might prove to be interested; or in the lack of such absurdities as running out of gas between cities and having to lose a half day's work in getting going again; these are all likely to be the effect of conscious and careful thinking and planning, rather than of any unconscious and lucky aptitude for the kind of work you are doing. Frequently, your crew manager or sales manager or somebody in the executive force above you is, or can be, of great help in organizing your routine for you with as little waste motion as possible. Frequently other salesmen, who for all their rivalries are usually generous and helpful to a newcomer in the field, can give you many tips which will save lost miles and wasted hours. Ordinary common sense, properly applied, will tell you that it is no use continuing to arrive at a certain customer's place of business at ten minutes after nine on a Wednesday morning, if that customer is in the

habit of always leaving his office on Wednesday mornings at eight-thirty. To fit such a customer into your scheme of things at a time when he can be seen, without subtracting from the efficiency of your trip in making other calls, may require more than common sense; but it is as much a part of your job to think out that problem, or have it done for you, as it is to sell the buyer when you get to see him.

BRAINS ARE AS USEFUL AS SAMPLES

But not all of the characteristics which appear at first glance to indicate a lack of adaptation for salesmanship are limited to beginners. There is a certain salesman I know well who has been covering a certain territory for nearly twenty years. This length of time, selling various lines but always the same type of merchandise to approximately the same clientele, shows that he is steady. He is thrifty, and owns a very nice home in the suburbs of one of our large eastern cities, to prove it. He is absolutely honest, sticks to the truth, has the confidence of his customers, and is as hard and long a worker as the persistent gentleman who wore me out in Buffalo. With these necessary virtues, this man could not help but make a success in salesmanship. He is no failure, by any means. But for all these advantages, he has maintained only a mediocre standing in any sales force of which he has been a part. His net earnings today are still quite moderate; and he has failed to become an outstanding success in his field because of one fault which is most likely to be explained, by those who have watched his work and know him best, as a natural lack of adaptation for salesmanship. Actually, his trouble is simply mental laziness. He is willing to make calls, to

rush from one to another as fast as his legs and his car will carry him, from six in the morning until ten at night; so long as he does not have to exert his brain and do any iota of creative thinking about how actually to make more or larger sales out of those calls.

There was a cousin of mine who, for a short while, went to the same one-room country school in North Carolina which I attended. She was actually a bright girl; but locally famous, nevertheless, for her utter inability ever to pass spelling, either in daily recitals, monthly tests, or final examinations. And this failure seemed to puzzle her as much as it did her family and friends. She would take her spelling lesson at night, and go over and over the thirty words assigned, for twenty times. Still missing most of them the next day she would go over that night's lesson twenty-two times. The next night she would move up her self-assigned "going over" of the list to twenty-five times; and the last I remember, at the end of the spring, she was "going over" all the words in her lesson 188 times each night—and thereby achieving just passing results. She had, of course, never exerted her brain to try to learn, and to fix in her mind, the spelling of any of the words. That was too much real mental work. She had assumed that she could dodge the actual mental endeavor involved by just passively exposing her brain to the list of words a sufficient number of times. Eventually, of course, the human brain being what it is, the number of exposures became so great that the mind could not avoid absorbing and remembering the correct sequence of letters in a majority of the words. But in the very beginning she could have learned how to spell them in one-third of the time, and without the useless

hocus-pocus of going over them twenty times, by merely concentrating her mind on the basic subject at hand instead of following some mechanical routine which avoided thinking.

The salesman I have been talking about sells merchandise in exactly the same way this cousin tried to learn spelling. He religiously carries in all of his samples at every place of business, and spreads them all out carefully and with equal emphasis, or lack of it, on every item for every buyer. It would be too much brain work to figure out which numbers are likely to be most useful, or most easy to sell, to the very diversified individual distributors in his territory; or on what numbers and in what ways he might put special emphasis, which would result in greater sales than a mere passive presentation of his line as a whole; or what striking and pointed arguments he might develop to fit particular products and particular customers, instead of a stereotyped repetition about every single number in his line, to every single customer, that it is an excellent product. This mechanical showing of his wares and going through the motions but not the spirit of salesmanship; this constant "going over" his words in the assigned lesson; this substitution of unremitting physical effort for a much less amount of mental effort which would prove more effective, is to him so much the easier way. It is not at all an uncommon characteristic. But if it is any particular lack of adaptation to salesmanship, then I am the Count of Monte Cristo. It is, I repeat, merely mental laziness, in whatever field it may be manifested. And this man, with all his virtues but with this handicap, has achieved just about exactly the same measure of success and security in selling

that he would have achieved in accounting, or teaching, or any of a dozen other callings where the abilities he does have could be used to reasonable advantage. If you are not willing to do a little hard and objective thinking about your job, and the detailed performances of that job, it's reasonably certain that they will be writing about you in the newspapers only when you die or run off with somebody else's wife. And while you may have just as happy a life without the notoriety of success, it's neither correct nor fair to blame the work you are in for your own shortcomings; or to consider yourself a round peg in a square hole, if the truth of the matter is that you are a peg with rather rounded edges in any hole where you might happen to land.

To make a long story short, writing poetry or painting landscapes may be an art, for all I know, requiring special endowments and gifts of Providence. So also may be the translation of hieroglyphics and the training of performing seals. But I do know that salesmanship is a work which is composed, not of special aptitudes, but of a complexity of the same combined factors of thinking and doing which make for success in other normal labors and pursuits.

CHAPTER 7

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

By this time it should be clear that salesmanship, as I conceive it, is not composed of tricks. At least, I certainly cannot lay out for you any bag full of cute stunts to be carried around in your head and pulled out at the proper moment, to overawe an obstreperous customer or to save a lost sale. But since experience itself is merely a summation of what a man has learned from all the little incidents of his own past, and that he has seen or heard of in the past of others, it is of course possible to acquire some helpful measure of experience from even the recountal, in a book, of incidents and emergencies in the lives of other salesmen. It is the intention of this chapter, therefore, merely to narrate a few such incidents and tell a few stories which might conceivably point the way to you or to me if we ran up against similar situations.

DEAD ENDS HAVE DETOURS

There is, for instance, the customer who is so positive he doesn't want and isn't going to buy anything, that he absolutely refuses even to look at your samples. The best handling of such a customer I have ever heard of was done by a friend of mine down in Pennsylvania many long years ago. My friend was at that time selling a line of dresses and women's clothing to department stores. It was the custom then, and may still be for all I know, for such salesmen to hire a room in their hotel, set up and display their sam-

ples, and then invite the prospective buyers in that town to come to the hotel and look over what they had to offer.

This friend of mine was lugging around with him nine trunks of women's clothes, for that purpose, at a very considerable expense in freight and haulage charges every time he moved on to a new city. He landed in a comparatively small town in Pennsylvania, after one of those long and discouraging spells of no business which tends to get anybody down; and which are even more discouraging when heavy expenses are running all of the time. He hired his showroom, left word with a porter to move the nine trunks into it, and then went forth to see the buyer of the one department store in that town who was a possible customer.

That buyer was cordial, but firm. He had bought all the women's clothing he intended to buy, no matter how good the bargains which might be available. He wasn't going to buy any more, and so he didn't even want to be tempted by seeing any more samples. It was, therefore, no use for him to see such samples, he just wasn't going up to look at them, and that's all there was to it.

My friend appeared finally, and reluctantly, to give in. He turned, however, with one parting request. "That's all right, Mr. Jones," he said. "But would you mind just coming up with me, to give me a chance to look at those samples once again? It's been two weeks since I've seen the darn things myself."

This was so obviously true, and such a pathetically funny presentation of the sad truth, that it struck Mr. Jones' fancy exactly right. He not only went back to the hotel with my friend and looked conscientiously over all

his samples; but proved it to be the turning point in a bad streak by placing a nice order.

WAYS TO BUDGE A GRUDGE

Another frequent headache in the life and times of a salesman is the dealer who has a grudge, real or fancied, against the salesman's house; and who therefore has his mind completely made up that he is never again going to buy any merchandise from that company.

If such a man is normally dealing in the type of merchandise which you sell, and is a prospective customer who should be a regular one, it is certainly worth your while to go out of your way in trying to bring his grievance into the open, and to get his troubles ironed away. If the row or the cause of his annoyance happened while some previous salesman was covering the territory, a skillful new man can frequently shunt the fading remnant of anger on the part of such a prospect off against the preceding salesman, instead of the company itself, and resume business relations. Or if there is some real grievance against the company, and even if the claims of the prospect are utterly unreasonable from the house's point of view, a good sales manager will usually lean over backwards to satisfy such a claim, smooth the customer's feelings, and give the new man a clean slate on which to begin fresh dealings, with troublesome customers and friendly ones alike.

But occasionally such a prospect is so definitely sore at the house itself that he cannot even be approached, by an old salesman or a new one, to try to straighten matters out. Such a man just shuts up like a clam, and says he doesn't want to buy any of those goods. Frequently, he makes a

point of being friendly or at least courteous to a new salesman for the house, to convince the salesman—and himself—that he is not at all a bad fellow at heart, but one who has been treated shamefully and doesn't intend to get over it. Ordinarily, time, patience, and tact will wear these fellows down. If the new salesman keeps calling persistently, without pressing his business or giving the prospect a chance to get into an argument over the matter, he has the psychological advantage that most people find it hard to remain angry very long in the face of continued friendly overtures. The job here for any such new salesman is to find some way to make it as easy as he possibly can for this disgruntled prospect to buy without having to appear to give in, or to confess himself a disgruntled grouch for not having bought earlier. If the company happens to present some striking new product, or some dealer combination offer of old products which really is to the buyer's advantage, the salesman may be able to go right in and offer it enthusiastically, exactly as if nothing had happened. Possibly he can get away with acting as if there were no previous soreness or lapse of business relations even to be remembered; and the buyer will frequently be glad himself to forget all about "having a mad on" and start doing business again.

But if no good opportunity presents itself through the products offered, or if such a hostile buyer is particularly unchristian and obstinate in the persistence of his anger and his refusal to do business, either heroic measures or a simple wisecrack will sometimes turn the trick. It's a mark of perspicacity of the salesman to know when and whether to resort to abnormal tactics.

A certain salesman that I know was once selling candy bars to the jobbers and wholesale houses in Indiana. And he found when he took the state that the proprietor of one good-sized candy jobbing house not only had bought nothing from the firm for two years, but refused to look at his samples and obviously had no intention of ever buying again. An investigation by letters to and from the office disclosed that the dispute had not amounted to much originally, having been over a few boxes of spoiled goods; and that the house had finally given in and allowed this customer the full credit for the spoiled goods which he had claimed, so that he now had no further claim of any kind. However, he had become so angry at that time, in thinking that he *wasn't* going to get full credit, that he had made up his mind never to buy from that company again, and was still keeping it made up in the same direction.

Since this salesman's candy bars were being sold regularly and profitably by competitive jobbers all around this prospect, and the prospect was willing to pass up both his own profit and the convenience of his own salesman in doing without these goods, he was clearly a man decidedly more than normal in his obstinacy. So our manufacturer's salesman, knowing no other course, set out to break down his victim by a long siege; and for eleven months he called once every month, brought in his samples, and went through the motions of trying to get a hearing. After eleven months, and on the eleventh call, he still was not allowed even to show his samples. He then figured patience and forbearance had accomplished all they ever would. Instead of bowing himself courteously out, he reared up on his hind legs and spoke a different kind of piece.

"Mr. Jones," he said, "I get paid a salary and expenses by my house to call on customers in my territory, including you. They are going to keep right on paying me for calling, whether I ever sell you a bill of goods or not. And as long as I keep on selling most of my other one hundred and thirty-four customers, they are going to keep on paying me whether I ever call on you again or not. So, if I quit right now, I don't lose anything. But you do!

"I have been coming in here for eleven months because I have goods which you can handle to advantage, and you know it. I have always been as patient and courteous, even in the face of your refusal to see my samples, as I knew how. But if eleven months cannot bring you to talk business, even in something you should be interested in, with a man who has never done you any harm, working for a house against which you have no just complaint, then I guess eleven years won't either, and I am ready to call it quits right now. But if I go out this door once more without your even looking at my samples, I am never coming back. And as long as I work for this company, no matter how staple our products may become, we are never going to sell you another box, and I know my house will back me up in that. There are too many other good jobbers in Indiana for me to waste any more of my time, and of the company's, on somebody who won't even look at what I have to offer." With that, our salesman started to pick up his display case.

"Pretty independent, aren't you?" the buyer said. "Well, open 'em up and let's see what you've got." Of course it might not have worked. But the salesman figured rightly that he had nothing to lose, and so the gamble was worth while. In this particular case it did work. Such out-

spokenness is recommended only as a last possible resort, but if all else fails, it may be worth trying.

In another case I know, the same results were achieved by a much more pleasant method. The circumstances were remarkably similar; and in fact these particular circumstances have a habit of recurring with considerable frequency. But about the ninth time this other salesman called on a similarly belligerent and unyielding prospect, the buyer himself brought the question up; probably because this salesman had such a pleasing and ingratiating personality that the buyer had taken a personal liking to the salesman despite himself.

"Mr. Smith," the buyer said, "you have been calling on me now for about eight or nine months. I have nothing against you and do not mind you calling. But in all that time I haven't bought anything from your house. I had no intentions of buying from your house, as I told you, and I still haven't. I wonder why you bother to keep coming in at all?"

The salesman grinned good-naturedly. "Well, I'll tell you," he said. "You say 'no' so automatically and so easily whenever you see me, that I figured one of these days you were just going to forget and say 'yes' even when you meant 'no,' by mistake."

He laughed, and at this the buyer laughed too. "All right," he said, "maybe I will. Let's see what you have to offer."

CHAPTER 8

MORE TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Because my own experience has been entirely in the candy business, my illustrations are likely to be top-heavy in that field. But the ready application of most of them, to even very diverse types of selling, is fairly obvious. And especially in the practice of one of the three fundamental "virtues" which I emphasize, that of liking your customers and wanting to do favors for them instead of worrying about having them like you, there are certain usual "tricks of the trade" which are common to practically all businesses.

PUDDINGS PROVE MORE THAN RECIPES

Some years ago a young man came to our house selling electric vacuum cleaners. My wife had previously turned down several salesmen with vacuum cleaners. She had an old one which got by. She didn't have the money, or want to spend the money, for a new one. But this smart young man was not worried by any such considerations. "That's perfectly all right," he told her at the door, affably, and with the utmost sincerity. "I'd be awfully lucky if I did find you all ready to buy a vacuum cleaner when I call like this for the first time. But some day, even if it's years from now, you are going to buy a new one. Since we have the best on the market, we naturally hope it will be ours; but it may not be, if you never have a chance to find out ours is the best. So I am not really trying to sell you a vacuum

cleaner today, particularly. I just want to give you a demonstration. That's what I am paid to do. There's not only no possible obligation to buy but we do not even expect you to buy. So just let me go in and clean up a few rugs for you. It doesn't cost you anything, and I like to do it. Besides, that's my job."

He was so ingenuous, frank, and willing that my wife let him in. And he proceeded to make good exactly on his promise. He hooked up that vacuum cleaner and cleaned rugs, not just in little patches to show his machine, but as thoroughly and in as unsalesminded a manner as any boy who might have been hired by the hour for that purpose. He worked away steadily, and as unobtrusively but efficiently as possible, for about an hour; by which time he had made practically everything in the downstairs part of the house almost as shingly clean as on the day the furniture had been purchased. Then he packed up his cleaner and its attendant gadgets and feelers, preparatory to leaving. My wife naturally thanked him for all the work.

"That's all right, Ma'am," he said. "It's really fun with this thing. Whenever you do get ready to buy, this is the one you will want. And here's a little leaflet which gives you the price, and all the dope about it, better than I could. You can keep it on file, for whenever you might want to take time to read it."

My wife kept him while she read the leaflet then and there; and having already been convinced by its actual performance that the cleaner was as far superior to hers as a modern Cadillac to a 1908 Maxwell, she also bought it then and there. This young man had made a sale of over a hundred dollars, of which sales he certainly did not need to

make more than one a day to earn a fair income for himself; by the simple procedure of going ahead and doing some honest hard work, which would be a real favor to his prospective customer, and letting the sale take care of itself. It was the smartest kind of salesmanship, because if he managed to get into eight houses a day and went through exactly the same routine, the law of averages was almost certain to give him the number of sales which he needed.

When I was a boy on a farm in North Carolina I saw exactly the same procedure practised by a man selling sewing machines. Any one of these itinerant agents would bring his machine in from the back of his wagon, and show you what a superior machine it was; by fancy stitches, rapid seams which meant nothing, and what have you. But this man went at it differently. He brought his machine in and asked what sewing of dresses, petticoats, and shirts was most needed in the near future, and for which the cloth had already been bought and was available. Without bothering to keep exclaiming over the beautiful work the machine was doing, or even calling attention to its proficiency at all, he let that be observed by those who cared to watch; while he proceeded to make shirts, petticoats, and simple dresses. I am no seamstress and cannot tell you how many articles he turned out. But he knew all about paper patterns, how to handle a pair of scissors, where to put the button holes, and the difference between hemstitching and picoting. What's more, he did that work all day long, every day, on what really was a good machine, and he was an expert at it. The consequence was that in a couple of hours or maybe more—I do not remember—he had piled up finished and

needed articles of wearing apparel enough to create both surprise and gratitude which I do remember. And, not to attempt any suspense in this short short story, this man also sold his machine.

GOOD WILL DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN

To return to my better-known candy business, and the more immediate past, there was a candy wholesaler in Cincinnati last year who had a few boxes of spoiled candy on which the manufacturer would undoubtedly be willing to give him full credit. But to keep this away from his good stock, and still save it to show his point, he had stowed it away in an attic over his place of business; and had then moved his place of business. So, when the salesman for the manufacturer called, this jobber did not have the candy nor even the wrappers to show him, and no credit could be issued without something to send the house. The wholesaler promised to go himself, or send somebody in time, to the attic of his former place of business, get at least the wrappers, and have them ready for the salesman next month. But the old place of business was over a mile away, the wholesaler and his employees worked long hours and were always busy, and one month after another went by with nothing having been done and no wrappers to send in. And still, the salesman knew, the fact that this customer had never received credit for these goods either was rankling or would begin to rankle in his mind, and would eventually interfere with continued steady business. So, about the third month, the salesman asked for a key to the old attic, took an hour of his time, went himself to the jobber's former place of business, waded through the rubbish which

had accumulated in the attic due to the moving, practically fought his way through worms which had founded their colonies in other spoiled candy of other manufacturers which had also been stowed away in the same place, performed the by now disagreeable task of unwrapping his own candy, and returned to his customer's new storeroom with the bundle of wrappers all ready to be forwarded to the factory.

The amount involved was only three or four dollars; it was no legitimate headache of the salesman unless his customer was at least willing to present something tangible as evidence for the credit; and there were certainly many other ways the salesman could have spent his time more pleasantly than in unwrapping decayed merchandise. But he honestly wanted to see this jobber get the three or four dollars of credit which the house would send him, on the evidence of these wrappers. And he had the brains, and the good will towards his customer, to go ahead and do something about it. *That* is a trick of the trade; which of course is no trick at all, but the application of ordinary good sense and willingness to look out for the interests of a customer whom you consider and treat as one of your friends.

Practically all of the best "tricks of the trade" must fall into the same category, and be similar in principle to that one.

The salesman who takes a customer to lunch because it is the thing to do would probably find, if he could read the customer's mind, that his guest had rather buy his own lunch, and probably had rather eat it alone or with one of his own business associates. But the salesman who takes

a customer to lunch, or grabs him by the arm and goes out with him for a cup of coffee at ten-thirty in the morning, because he really likes that customer and enjoys having a cup of coffee with him, is probably spending the firm's money and time to good advantage.

"SECRETARY-ITIS" CAN BE CURED

One of the persistent problems which faces salesmen in almost every field is how to get in to see the buyer who won't let you into his office, and who won't come out. This is a problem to which neither I nor anybody else can give you a general solution. And some of the tricks which are reported to have been used in the past are not to be recommended. Somebody of the Diamond Jim Brady type, selling railroad equipment, is once supposed to have conquered such a difficult case by tearing a hundred-dollar bill into two pieces; and sending half of it in with a note attached that the other half was outside waiting for an interview. But this daring and expensive procedure became outdated, when repeated by a less fortunate imitator. Because the buyer, who had heard of that game before, sent a memorandum back through his secretary that he still was not interested in an interview, but so far as the halves of the bill were concerned, he was willing either to buy or sell.

A more humorous solution was recorded by Eddie Cantor. Having prospective business during the last war, with the great banking firm of J. P. Morgan and Company; and, according to Eddie, being unable to get in to see the principals because he was not recognized as anybody of importance, he went home and put on his blackface. He then returned and announced himself as the "coon" of Kuhn,

Loeb & Company. According to Cantor, he was immediately ushered into Mr. Morgan's private office.

But it is doubtful if such vile puns would actually achieve results outside of Cantor's humorous imagination. The best answer to the problem, which I recall, was made on the spur of the moment; and was, as a matter of fact, a very common-sense approach. The salesman, on having his card returned with the comment that Mr. Jones didn't care to see him, scribbled a note on the other side and sent it back. The note said: "I have spent half a day to come to see you. If I had not honestly thought I had something to offer to your advantage, I would not have gambled that much of my time. Don't you think the gamble is worth ten minutes of yours?" He got in to see his man.

Another common-sense method is to have your house write a letter to such a prospect, explaining your business, if advisable, and asking for an interview for you at the convenience of the buyer. This is only effective, however, as a usual rule, if it is a special case and a special letter. What is obviously a circular to a great many customers, for that purpose, is both a waste of time and a slam on the salesmanship of the representative it is supposed to aid.

In summary, and without multiplying illustrations unnecessarily, practically all tricks of the trade are a matter of using your head as well as your automobile engine, your feet and your sample case.

CHAPTER 9

DON'TS

It is always desirable and more interesting to be constructive, than to try to be helpful by merely negative injunctions. And of a thousand things I can think of which salesmen do and should be told not to do, about a thousand and one are things which they all know very well they should not do in the first place. And still, a book which is intended as an aid to salesmanship would not be complete without at least a reminder of certain common failings; and an explanation of why some of these failings are more obvious mistakes, purely from the point of view of the salesman's own business, than sometimes at first appears to a salesman himself.

In not wasting time over such simple instructions as not to get drunk or steal from your company's collections, it would seem almost equally unnecessary to insert an admonition not to pad your expense account. But the fact remains that an appreciable percentage of otherwise honest men do have an elastic conscience on this score; and that few such men realize how directly and inevitably they are working against their own interests, even if, at best, the house never catches up with them or suspects what they are doing.

STEALING FROM YOURSELF IS SILLY

The basic reason why this is such a foolish procedure is very simple. Since every company, no matter what it is selling, must allow a certain percentage of the sales dollar

for sales costs, and then try to sell its products on a budget percentage thus arrived at, every company must in one way or another figure as accurately as it can the total volume of business produced by any salesman's territory, against the selling expense of that territory. And this selling expense naturally includes a salesman's salary, or any other form of direct remuneration, plus the total of other expenses and allowances involved. So that what a man may be chiselling haphazardly by any such underhand method as expense padding is almost certain in the long run to take the place of equally as much or even more that he might otherwise be receiving legitimately.

Let's suppose that John Doe is working the state of Arkansas for a manufacturer of oatmeal; at a salary of thirty dollars per week and expenses. John Doe is furnished a car by the company and turns in a weekly record of his expenditures for gasoline, oil, hotel bills, meals, and whatever incidentals the company allows. This actually totals, let us say, thirty-five dollars per week. Assuming that it costs the oatmeal manufacturer five dollars a week depreciation to supply the automobile, the total sales expense involved to keep the Arkansans happy with that particular brand of oatmeal is thirty dollars plus five dollars plus thirty-five dollars, or seventy dollars a week. Now I do not know anything about the cost of selling oatmeal, and I do not even like the stuff. But let's suppose that, after sharpening all the pencils in the home office, the manufacturer has figured out that he can allow ten per cent for sales expense, and not a penny more. This means that if John Doe sells seven hundred dollars worth of oatmeal per week, he is earning his pay.

Now the chances are, unless this hypothetical business I am imagining is more fortunate than most of the real ones I know, that the first year John Doe has this territory he will be selling perhaps five hundred dollars or six hundred dollars worth of oatmeal per week, and thus costing his company money. But if his company has things figured out properly in the first place, and if John Doe is a good man, about the second year he will get up to the needed seven hundred dollars per week; and then some weeks begin to run ahead of the figure. Now any good conscientious salesman who can make the grade is one of the most prized assets in any organization; and Mr. Oatmeal Manufacturer would be a very unusual and dumb manufacturer indeed if he did not want to keep such a salesman, and to keep him happy. So, he is quite anxious to pay John Doe all that the territory costs will stand; and pretty soon he begins to remark to himself that Arkansas is running over seven hundred dollars per week, and that the company probably can and should afford to add another five dollars to the weekly check of their Arkansas salesman. It isn't all as simple as this, and in some cases such a manufacturer would feel that the territory should be earning eighty dollars per week before the total sales expense was run up to seventy-five dollars; either to cover the loss during the promotional period, or as a margin of safety for future drops. But the fact remains that almost inevitably any manufacturer, who is bright enough to have a product selling successfully in Arkansas, is bright enough to want to keep his salesmen as well paid as he possibly can in proportion to their respective volumes. This isn't a question of fairness, or humanitarianism, or generosity at all. It is just

sound common sense and good business for the manufacturer.

But let us suppose that about the time John Doe does begin to run seven hundred dollars per week, he begins to put down two-fifty for hotel bills, for nights when he really pays two dollars; and seventy cents for lunches when he really spends forty-five cents; for a total gain to himself of about five dollars per week. He thinks of it himself, and considers it as still showing to the house, that he is getting thirty dollars per week and expenses. And presently, since his sales have been increasing for the year or two he has been with them, he begins to wonder why he doesn't get a raise. But in the meantime the chances are that the manufacturer has also been looking at the figures with a less romantic eye. And possibly, without it even occurring to him that there is anything questionable about the expenses, he merely notices that a year ago John Doe was doing six hundred dollars a week at a total expense of seventy dollars, and wasn't making the grade; that he is now doing seven hundred dollars per week at a total expense of seventy-five dollars, and thus still isn't making the grade, after nearly two years. Somehow he rather gets his mind made up that John Doe isn't really paying out, probably never will, and that he himself is probably being a little soft in the head to keep on carrying a man who doesn't quite meet the necessary sales-expense figure. And after such an impression has once been arrived at, it probably will take a long time and a very material increase in sales, over a steady period, to ever reverse in that manufacturer's mind his idea about the Arkansas territory. John Doe may find himself selling nine hundred dollars worth of

oatmeal per week, for many months, with no likely opening to treat himself to even another five dollars, and much less the fifteen dollars additional weekly income, by expense padding, before the manufacturer becomes convinced that there should be an increase in John Doe's salary.

This is an exaggeratedly simple presentation, of course. But in its main outlines it contains the elements of truth with regard to such situations which occur every day. And in actual practice the folly of such a course is greatly accentuated by the fact that the manufacturer usually does know what is going on, has a pretty good idea as to whether the hotels in Arkansas at which his salesman is stopping charge two dollars or two-fifty per night, and is at least annoyed with the salesman for this chiselling even if generous-minded enough not to condemn such a man completely for out and out dishonesty. Where a salesman begins to "pull down" for himself an additional three dollars or five dollars per week, or whatever the amount may be, he soon finds himself counting definitely upon this additional sum as a part of his wages, and spending such wages accordingly. So that the practice, once started, is very difficult to discontinue; for its discontinuance has the same effect as a voluntary decrease in pay. Consequently, it usually goes on and on. And where the manufacturer or a sales manager is conscious of this self-given raise on the part of one of his salesmen, even though the man may have been in line for such a raise and the volume of sales will support it, he isn't going to substitute a legitimate and actual raise of the company in exchange for a requested stopping of such chiselling. The sales manager usually, in the case of an otherwise good man, and unless the padding

is so flagrant that the morale of the company will not permit it to go unnoticed, is just going to ignore the matter officially. But he will hold off giving the offender an actual raise, over a period of time, and over a continued increase in sales, which might otherwise have brought about for the same man even more of a legitimate increase in pay.

IT'S FUN—IF YOU DON'T DO IT

Without regard to the morals involved, therefore, there is nothing a salesman can do which is more foolish, from the purely personal and business point of view of his own progress with his company. That it is a moot point among both salesmen and executives, of sufficient importance to be seldom lost sight of in any company, is shown by the frequent jokes concerning it. The old favorite, of course, is about the salesman who had to pay for his Aunt Mary's operation; and about all the devices he resorted to, to add a dime here and a quarter there to the items on his expense books, for several weeks running, so as to accumulate the fifty dollars needed to pay the hospital without having to take a nickel out of his own pocket. The idea of having his company treat Aunt Mary to her operation probably seemed a good one at the time. But the chances are, even if his petty purloinings were never discovered or suspected, that he would have been better off in the long run to have borrowed the fifty dollars and paid it back one dollar at a time out of his weekly checks.

In fact, a good salesman that I know did just that once, after a cute piece of humor which showed he was at least aware of the temptation involved. The particular man was living at home and working his local territory, with a car

furnished by the company, so that his total expenses ran to only a few dollars per week. One Saturday, much to the treasurer's surprise, he turned in an expense sheet reading as follows:

Gasoline	3.40
Change of oil	1.50
Telephone calls35
Aunt Mary's operation	50.00
	<hr/>
Total	55.25

When he was called in by the amused treasurer, he explained that he really did have an Aunt Mary living with him who had just had an operation; that he either had to chisel the money somehow or borrow it to pay her hospital bill; and that it seemed so much more sensible to chisel it all in one lump sum than to go to the bother of slipping it in by adding dimes and quarters to so many different entries. Whereupon the treasurer said he would settle for the required loan instead. The cashier advanced the salesman fifty dollars. And the salesman paid it back at the rate of a few dollars per week.

In another case a friend of mine once had a member of his sales force write him as follows:

Dear Mr. Blank:

I have just got to have a new suit of clothes. Had you rather I put it through the expense account as tips or additional gasoline?

(signed) John Doe

My friend, having a good sense of humor, probably exercised it in his reply. But having also a good sense of figures and a long experience as a salesman himself, he would have

been very likely to smell even a cheap suit of clothes floating through the weekly expense accounts—even one sleeve at a time. It doesn't pay, any way you look at it; and this is another one of those things that you can either take my word for now, or wait for years and find out for yourself.

CHAPTER 10

MORE DON'TS

Next on our list of things to do everything else but, is losing your temper. And this is no matter of being wishy-washy, or weak-kneed, but just the opposite. For the more unreasonable your customer is, and the more he loses his temper and becomes abusive, the more you weaken your own position, and put yourself in his same class, by losing yours.

BOXING GLOVES GO POORLY WITH BUSINESS SUITS

It is true that once in a great while surprising results may happen to be achieved by letting yourself go. We have all heard stories of some salesman who, being unreasonably abused and cussed at by some unconscionably hard-boiled dealer, has finally turned like the proverbial worm, and told the astounded customer profane things about himself and his ancestry that he had never heard before, and that many other salesmen had longed to tell him. And these stories usually go on to a dramatic conclusion, where the abashed customer says: "Well, maybe you've got something after all. Better send me a hundred gross." But such stories, even when not exaggerated, are the exceptions that prove the rule; and are excitingly rare, or they wouldn't be repeated so gleefully. In nine hundred and ninety-nine cases out of a thousand, as is perfectly obvious to any reader, this return of abuse in kind would not result in a sale. And this prospective loss of a chance to do business is

so apparent that it is not even my chief reason for recommending against allowing yourself to lose your temper, under any circumstances where your degree of self-restraint will allow you to keep it.

The real point is that loss of temper, even on a smaller and much less conclusive scale, is a loss of dignity, for both yourself and the house you represent; and a temporary loss of control over your own actions and words, which can only decrease your personal efficiency for whatever job you are there to do. You can meet unreasonableness with pleasant firmness much more effectively, and much more beneficially in the long run, than by a counter offensive which is likely to become equally unreasonable. A goat butting his head against a stone wall will presently knock himself out, without doing any more serious damage to the stone wall than spattering it with a little blood. But if, instead of a stone wall, he meets head on another goat charging against him, it is possible that the second goat may come out far the worse in the encounter while the first one is still up and raring to charge again. The moral is, be a stone wall, when your unreasonable customer becomes a furious and charging goat, instead of another goat like him. It's a lot safer, and more satisfactory in the long run.

BEGGARS SHOULD USE TIN CUPS

Admonition number three in this catalogue is also simple. Don't beg for business. Put in more positive form, this means you should sell your product and its merits; not yourself, your overdue rent bill, and your three starving children. Whining for business, on the basis of how bad you personally need it, will sometimes get an order.

But such orders are seldom worth much, in the long run, to any company. And such a selling practice is one of the surest gates to the road out for yourself.

Many years ago I heard the account of an experience of a Boston manufacturer, which we will simplify considerably for our present purpose of illustration. This company sent two new salesmen, Tom White and Henry Black, to Ohio; White to the northern part and Black to the southern part of the state. Both were to sell a product which was already turning over quite well in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania; but on which the manufacturer was not yet ready for any promotional work in Ohio, and probably would not be ready for another year. The sales that these two men made, therefore, would have to stand on their own feet.

Both men opened up about seventy-five jobbing accounts before they were called in and transferred to other areas for other work. A year later, as originally intended, the company sent permanent salesmen to that state, supported by promotional work. A check-up (at that time) revealed that, of seventy-five men sold by Henry Black in the southern part of the state, around seventy had repeated by mail on their own initiative, and over fifty were already handling the product regularly. Of seventy-five jobbing accounts sold by Tom White in the northern part of the state, only five had ever repeated at all, and only one was now using the product regularly. The divergence was almost astounding. It was also enlightening, especially since by this time the management knew the two men well enough to be fully aware of the reasons for this difference.

Henry Black had gone into this strange territory, where neither he nor the house nor the product were known, and sold the product. It was the best damn product of its kind anybody had ever made. It was going to be a big seller that no dealer could do without. And any jobber who didn't buy it, and thus get the benefit of handling it at the earliest opportunity, was blindly missing a good bet. With a hundred variations of the same story which all led to the same point. A week after Henry Black had passed on, when the goods arrived from the factory, the jobber said to himself: "Oh yes, that's the item that fellow was so excited about and thought was so damned good. We'd better get to work putting it out and see if maybe we haven't got something."

Tom White, however, had gone to northern Ohio, and in this strange territory, where neither he nor the product nor the house were known, had sold *himself*. He had a pleasing personality, and turned it on full tilt. He was a long ways from home and it was a tough grind, as the jobbers could appreciate. He had to make good because he had just got this job with the company, and he needed it something fierce. In fact (if and when a sympathetic jobber began to listen with a friendly ear) he had five kids, had been out of work four months before getting this connection, and had been having a pretty tough time in general. It was surprising how much even a little order would mean to him, and how much he would appreciate it. And a hundred variations, all to the same effect. He got the orders. Seventy-five of them. But a week after he had gone on, when the goods came in from the factory, each jobber said to himself: "Oh yes, darn it. That must be the

goods I bought from that swell fellow, Tom White, who was here last week. Maybe I shouldn't have bought them; but put them on the shelves anyway, and I guess we'll get rid of the stuff eventually."

The profit on those first sales, without any repeat business, didn't pay the company for Tom White's expenses out there, and so the orders in the long run weren't worth a tinker's damn. Actually, when the territory was given a permanent status, a year later, the fact that many dealers had had this product on their shelves for several months, without selling it, was a serious psychological handicap to the new man and the promotional crew which took over the job of developing that territory.

The application of the argument is not quite so easy to all lines of selling. Many readers will rise to tell me that an order for a vacuum cleaner is still the sale of a vacuum cleaner, no matter for what reason the housewife was persuaded to buy. In the direct sale of consumer items, and some other fields of selling, there is truth to this point. But the truth is offset by the fact that whining and personal reasons for wanting the sale are much less likely to secure orders of this kind than they are in the case of resale goods, which a dealer merely adds to his own stock in trade, as in the story above. And when the two factors, of proportionate ease of making the sale and proportionate value of the sale after it is made, are added together, anywhere down the whole scale of selling from magazine subscriptions to locomotives, it will be found that the results constitute no recommendation for the whining school of salesmanship. Any experienced sales manager wants a man who sells his product. And here again you might as well listen

to, and be guided by, the voice of baldheaded experience (the writer), if it is possible for you to learn without having to absorb all the hard knocks of such learning that other men have already taken for you.

CHAPTER 11

SOME FINAL DON'TS

Another negative pointer is well worth remembering. Don't run down your own house, or agree with customers who do. Siding in with either the casual remarks or the more deep-seated feelings of a customer, when such remarks or feelings are hostile to your company, is bound to backfire. If you do not really like and respect the house you are working for, you have no business holding on to the job anyway. But if circumstances are such that you feel you must continue to work for such people, and if you have, therefore, no deep-seated sense of loyalty to the company which will cause you to fight down disparaging remarks against it, there is still a very excellent reason for never agreeing with such remarks. And that reason is the effect on your own business.

We do not need to go into the psychology involved, although it is not too devious. But it is perfectly clear and certain that if a salesman does not like the company he is working for, and its management, and lets this dislike become known to his customers, the fact will seriously hurt his sales. For one thing, competition is so keen in almost all lines, and so many good products are offered, that a buyer frequently places an order where he does, because, other things being equal, he has a personal preference for buying from that particular house. And if the very salesman representing the house, who should know the organization best, doesn't think they are a good company, then the buyer can-

not help wondering whether he should think they are a good company either; or whether there is any sound reason on his part for giving them business. On the other hand, if the salesman has an honest admiration and liking for his company and his bosses, so that he naturally radiates his opinion as to them being fine people to do business with, a certain amount of this opinion automatically seeps into the attitudes of the customers on whom he is calling.

A KNIFE CAN HAVE TWO EDGES

A dramatic illustration of this fact was contained in a story recently told me by a friend. "One of our salesmen," this friend said, "was covering far too much territory. He could average calling on his customers only about once every eleven weeks, when efficiency in our particular business required calls at intervals of not more than a month. Consequently we cut this salesman's territory in two. He was on a straight commission basis, and so he feared the reduction of his territory and of his number of customers would reduce his income in the same proportion. We were confident that the more frequent calls, allowed by the smaller number of customers, would double his sales with those customers, and give him a much more solid and substantial business of at least as much volume, as he had had before. Because we had adequate experience to support this belief, we were willing to back it up by guaranteeing him the same income for the first considerable period after the change. And because the smaller territory was of a size which could be attended to and followed up properly by this salesman, we were willing to spend good money there in promotional work to help out his business and ours.

“In other words, we were confident that the change would actually work out to the salesman’s advantage. We had made up our minds to see that it did. And we gave him such assurances, supported by the fact that he had always found us to mean what we said in the several years he had worked for us.

“Nevertheless, this salesman did not believe us. The more he thought about it, the more he brooded, and the more he disbelieved; and the more he disbelieved, the more he brooded still. He became convinced that this was just our way of eventually easing him out. That the man we sent to his territory, to help him out by doing detail work, was to be given this territory permanently in another year; and that he himself would be left entirely out in the cold. And the more he became convinced that this is what we really had in mind, the more he also began to consider the actual division of territory as a raw deal.

“The result was that this man, without apparently realizing or being able to understand how much more it would hurt him and his business than it would us—for that was his whole territory, while it was only one small section of the country for us—went out for the next few months thoroughly disgruntled with the house for which he was working, and quite willing and ready to tell every customer what a rotten deal we had given him. He had many friends among the jobbers on whom he was calling, who were quite willing to listen to his story, to side in with his views, to tell him what a fine fellow they thought he was, and to agree with his opinion of the house. But they still didn’t give him business. Their personal liking for him, even though it was increased at the minute by a sympathetic

feeling, did not offset the antipathy to the company which he was creating; certainly not enough to give him more and larger orders, as he possibly anticipated. Instead, the customers offered their sincere sympathy, and possibly even an occasional courtesy order. But in the regular buying of his products which they were normally handling they kept their purchases down to a minimum, or skipped altogether, rather than place orders, even through this friend, with the company which had treated him so shamefully.

“The end of the year came, and our company sent this man a check for several hundred dollars; the difference between his earnings for that year and the preceding year. This was despite our feeling that the decrease had been entirely due to the lack of cooperation and support on the part of the salesman himself. But this was what we had originally assured him would happen if his earnings did decrease, and it came through exactly as promised. Also, the detail man, to whom this salesman had really thought the company was going to give his job and his territory, was transferred to another state half way across the country; and was given a new territory of his own, exactly as the company had planned when it put him out doing detail work to gain experience. And all of a sudden, through a combination of a lot of other personal and business reasons as well, which do not need to be outlined here, this salesman found that he could very well be a great deal better off in his new and smaller territory, and under the new set-up, than he had ever been before. And that the house had really been looking out for his interests as well as its own, and trying to do him a favor. And so, after a few weeks of reaction and growing enlightenment over the

situation, his attitude was completely reversed. The reversal was undoubtedly made stronger through what the psychologists would call compensation, for his previous unfairness.

“The result was that, at the beginning of a new season, this salesman went out telling all of the same customers how mistaken he had been and how sorry he was to have misjudged and maligned a company which had really always played square with him; and which in this particular transaction had really been treating him exceptionally well. His friendliness to the house and his feeling that we were fine people to work for, or to do business with, was so genuine and so obvious that it rather rapidly effected the same reversal in the minds of his customers. And with no other factor whatsoever to account for the difference in sales, they went up amazingly; to the point where he was doing, not only more business than for the preceding season, but a great deal more business in the smaller territory than he had formerly done for twice the territory, with twice as many customers. He had all of his accounts feeling that he was working for a splendid house, and that it was a pleasure to give business to him and to them.”

This was an extremely clear-cut testing of the effect on his own business of the attitude which a salesman shows, for or against, his company. But where the lines are not so sharply drawn, nor any positive attitude so continuously fixed, the proportionate effects are still the same. Some cynical remark or sneer about your company may seem smart at the time it is made, and may draw a laugh or a ready agreement from customers who hear it. And for that immediate present you may feel that it has only shown

your own ability and brilliant perspicacity in a better light. But in the long run it is likely to be like an arrow shot into the air, that comes to earth again somewhere with unknown and frequently unhappy results. And if you go around shooting many of these arrows into the air, they will come down in time and puncture a lot of holes in your business.

EVERYBODY KNOWS A DRUM IS HOLLOW

A great many of the things which I might suggest that you should not do are already completely covered by the injunction to be your natural self. This next one certainly is, but let's mention it just the same. Do not try to play up your own importance. Business cards, letters announcing that Mr. Blank is going to call on such and such a day on important business, and the title of Vice-President, all have their places. So do monocles and spats. But formally presenting your business card to some stock clerk to take in to a man you can see through the window of his office, and who has already waved to you as an indication that he is coming out, is ludicrous at best. Most of the letters which some salesmen laboriously get up themselves and send out regularly three weeks in advance of every call, to announce that important event, their arrival, are thrown in the waste-basket without ever even registering an impression on the buyer's mind, unless it be annoyance. And when a man who is obviously just a salesman comes in to sell me something, after ostentatiously getting over through a card or otherwise that he is a Vice-President of the company, my own reaction is that if he has to depend on a title instead of his own salesmanship to get me interested, he probably

isn't worth taking too much of my time to listen to what he has to say. Forget about such artificial aids, which really are just tricks and readily recognizable as such. What you have in yourself, and the work you put in, is what counts; not the kind of colored spotlight you can turn on yourself or that work.

PEOPLE RENT OFFICES TO DO BUSINESS IN

Do not try to do your selling at conventions, on the golf course, or when your customer has invited you to his house for dinner. It has always been rumored that there are certain kinds of selling, of million-dollar insurance policies or stock in gold mines, I believe, which can be done best by getting your prospect out in a yacht and looking at you across a table full of Scotch and sodas. But this is a rumor which has never been confirmed by either my experience or even that of some of my friends who sell big insurance policies and mining stocks. And assuming that you are the ordinary run-of-the-mill salesman for products and services in daily use, it's a far better rule to confine your sales work to normal places of business and routine business activities of your customers.

I knew a sales manager once who was such a big shot in his own eyes that he was actually able to impress a number of the customers of his company with his personal importance, to the point that such customers felt flattered to be treated by him as one of his own good friends. And one of these customers, in another state, finally invited this sales manager to come up for a few days of fishing. The sales manager went up, made himself as agreeable as his patronizing magnanimity would allow, and enjoyed himself for

three days as the guest of his customer. The fishing was very successful. But when the sales manager got back to his home office he showed just what this supposed genuine friendship meant to him by shipping immediately several hundred dollars worth of goods to this customer, without having even bothered to get the order. But he misjudged his man. The customer took in the goods and paid for them. But he never bought another dollar's worth of merchandise from that man or from that house as long as that man was with it; and he told the story so devastatingly that it undoubtedly did the presumptuous sales manager many times as much harm as the sale had been worth. And the feeling of everybody I ever saw who heard the story was that it served him right.

Although it sometimes seems doubtful, customers are still human beings like the rest of us. And at times when they obviously would prefer to get away from business, or not to have sales pressure flavored with food and drink to break down their normal sales resistance, they resent or are likely to resent the annoyance, even if they do not consider the practice unfair and unbusinesslike. If a customer is really a friend of yours, and wants to treat you as a friend outside of business hours, you can accept or yourself make such overtures, or decline them as suits your own personal inclination. But do not embarrass your customer and friend by seizing the opportunity thus offered to ram a bill of goods down his throat, when you can just as easily and much more sensibly sell him the bill of goods, without any bad after effects, at the more propitious times when you are making your regular sales calls. If you are not polite, at least be smart.

REMEMBER THE FUTURE

Do not grab at a temporary sale, even a large one, at the risk of putting yourself thereby at a permanent or lasting disadvantage with that customer. The fable is as old as Æsop, of the dog who dropped his bone in the water to grab at the larger bone which he saw mirrored there. We all laugh at the dog's folly; yet salesmen do it every day.

Let's imagine a store where a certain clerk does the buying for eleven months of the year; and is naturally familiar with his stock on hand and the normal turnover of the items which the store uses. But for the one other month this clerk goes on a vacation, and the owner of the store himself does the buying during that period. And let's imagine a salesman who has been selling this store regularly for years, and who fits very well with the clerk who does the buying. His orders are never large, but are quite regular; and the business which he receives from that store is well worthwhile.

But once, during the clerk's vacation, this salesman sees a chance to "do a job" on the proprietor. The proprietor knows that his store buys goods regularly from this salesman's house. He has seen, and knows, that the salesman enjoys the confidence of the buyer-clerk. So he shows that he has a friendly inclination to listen to and believe whatever this salesman tells him; and he further shows that he is not too familiar with the turnover of the stock which his store purchases from this salesman's company. So the salesman seizes his chance, and sells the owner enough goods to last the store four or five months, instead of a month's supply which the clerk usually buys.

This is, of course, an extremely foolish procedure, and a double mistake. The clerk naturally values his own importance as a buyer, and if any really large orders are to be placed, wants to be the one to place them. He resents the implication that only the owner himself would venture to buy so much merchandise. In the second place, and aside from the personal element involved, the clerk knows that it was very poor business on the part of the store to buy so far ahead and such a heavy stock of goods, and that the salesman has taken advantage of the situation to load them down unreasonably. It is probably easy enough to find a competitor's goods which will take the place of this salesman's products, at the end of the four or five months when the store has sold those products out. Not only does the salesman miss an order on his routine calls for the next four or five months, which is a bad result obviously to be expected, but he eventually finds that he is out altogether. The buyer both resents him personally and distrusts him as a salesman; and it will probably be years later, after another salesman has been put on that territory, before that company ever gets any more business from the store which was once one of its excellent customers.

Except in the lack of names and street numbers, this is no imaginary case at all. It is a very real occurrence, which has happened thousands of times. And there is no need of elaborating the point. You can twist it around in many ways, to fit many situations, and the answer is always the same. Consider what course is going to give you the most business over a year's time or five years' time, and don't throw away your prospects of that business for a temporary mess of pottage. A bird in the hand may be worth two in

the bush, if you never expect to be in that field again; but this isn't true if you are coming around looking for more birds every day or every month in that same clump of bushes.

PROFESSORS BELONG IN CLASS ROOMS

And one final precept: Don't bore your customer. This is a rather inclusive suggestion. Don't talk down to your customer, don't talk up to him; and still more important, don't talk too much at all.

You may be a graduate of seven colleges, know more Latin verse than F.P.A., and more mathematics than Einstein; but if your customer started running a dry goods store after leaving high school, and his chief interest is in whether the Bees will win the pennant, he doesn't give a damn about your calculus or your Latin poetry either. Or if you yourself left the ninth grade to start selling soap and know nothing outside of soap today, except baseball and your family affairs, while your customer happens to spend all his spare time keeping up with the latest ideas of Eddington, Jeans, and the modern physicists, you are going to make only a very poor showing for yourself by trying to go over your head and talk his language. Whenever you do find a common point of interest, about which you can both talk on equal terms and concerning which your customer obviously likes to talk, then you can turn any sales call into a friendly visit as well. But even then the same rule applies as for any other form of visit; do not over-stay your welcome.

Any experienced salesman will tell you that many a sale is completely won, and the order taken, and then lost by a

change of mind while the salesman who took the order is engaging in a useless post-mortem of foolish conversation. As a general rule it's a very good idea to get your order and get out. Not with undue haste, nor any lack of appreciation, nor any such rush as fails to close up the transaction completely or to satisfy the buyer with all the information he wishes concerning his order and the goods he has bought; but with at least enough directness after the sale as well as before, to indicate that the salesman has other customers to call on, and other business to transact, and that he has not earned a week's rest or a raise in salary just for having closed that particular deal. Most customers feel that a salesman who has nothing better to do than to sit around their place of business, and swap yarns or gossip with them and other salesmen, cannot be selling a product for which there is any steady and insistent demand.

CHAPTER 12

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

It is an old axiom, with remarkably few exceptions, that a man cannot be really good at any job unless he likes it and is happy in the work. Selling, like any other occupation, is a means to an end. Whether it suits your purposes depends primarily on the end that you have set for yourself, and that end is something which you must decide. But, by all means, decide it. It is certainly the part of wisdom, and makes for happiness and contentment, to set a goal and a purpose for yourself in reasonable accordance with your own abilities as you honestly appraise them, and then direct your course towards the achievement of that goal.

If you have the ability, the ambition, and the driving power, to become the president of your company, there is no better or more effective means of making your powers felt, and rising above the level, than through salesmanship. If, on the other hand, you feel that your abilities and your desires are average, there is no surer field in which to earn a living proportionate to those abilities than in selling. To my mind it averages more closely to paying exactly in ratio to what you actually can and do accomplish, than any other profession. As a salesman, you need only to decide what you want and where you are going. If it is within reason, considering your natural endowments of health and mind, you have merely to put in enough work and thought, and you will get there. And you can feel the satisfaction, every day and with every hard-driving call, of being on your way.

As in any other occupation, you naturally wish to increase your efficiency for the job you are doing. A salesman who has no insistent urge to become a better salesman should be screwing nuts onto bolts at the end of an assembly line, or performing some other blueprinted routine task, instead. The achievement of marked improvement is, for most of us, entirely practicable and desirable. But the whole argument of this little book has been that you cannot cut the Gordian knots; you have to untie them.

Somebody has brilliantly remarked, with regard to the instability of everything about us, that there is nothing permanent in life—except change. We have been paraphrasing that philosophical wisecrack, throughout the text of this dissertation on what every young salesman should know—and every old salesman should practice. We can have done you some good, and have given you, in fact, all the short cuts there are, only if we have been convincing that you should not waste time looking for any; that there are no short cuts to salesmanship.

There are, instead, every day, opportunities to use your will power, your tact, your common sense, your physical stamina, and your mental capacities, to their fullest extent. Selling is not a "game," in the narrower sense of that word which is sometimes applied to it, at all. But in a much larger sense you can make it a game, of yourself against all the obstacles which challenge your skill and your determination. It is a great and real game, in which you can draw on and use, as your tools, all the resources which combine to make up the person that is you. And it is a game which everybody, even your business rivals, likes to see you win.

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