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Publication/Creation

London : Isaac Pitman, [1909?]

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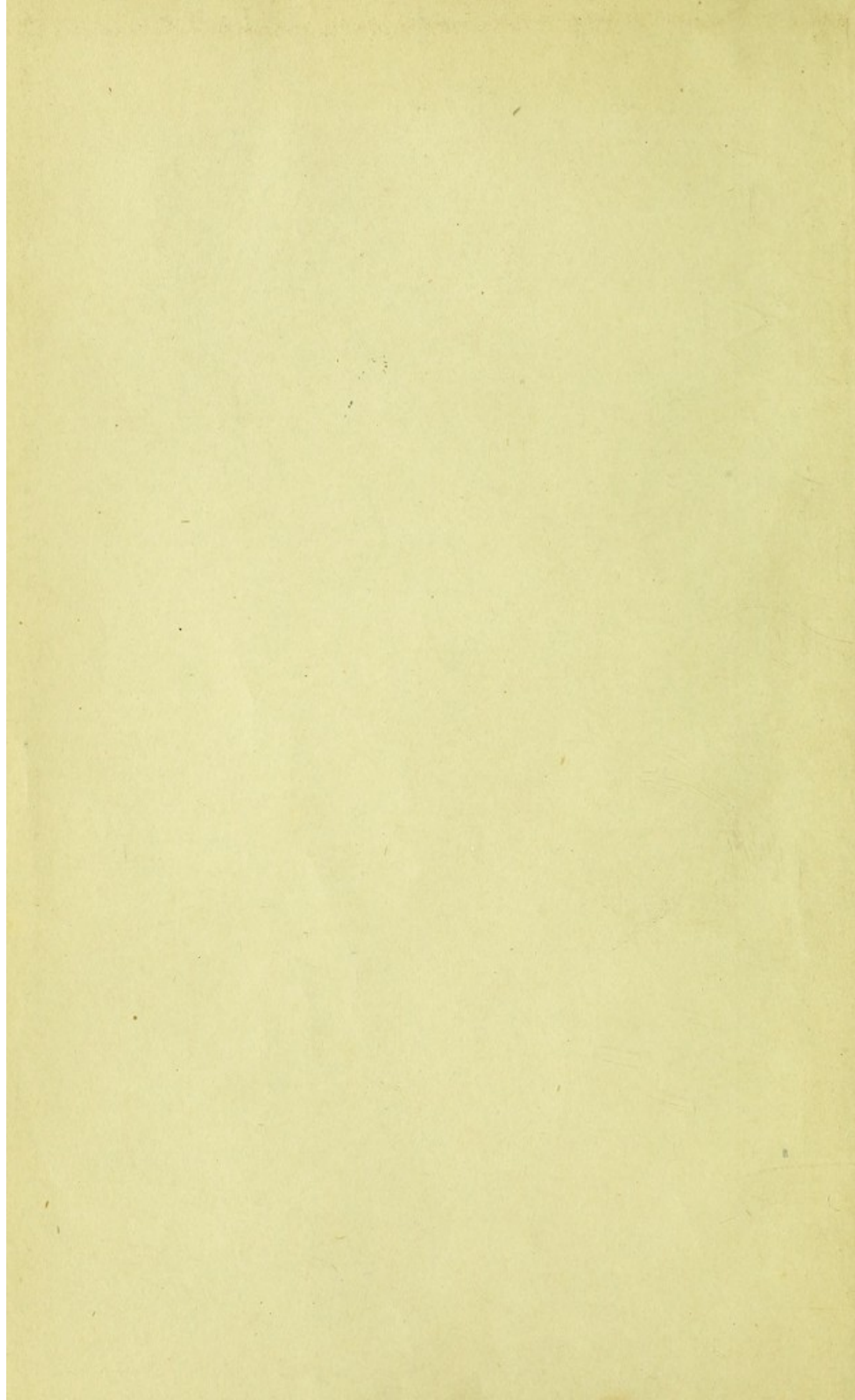
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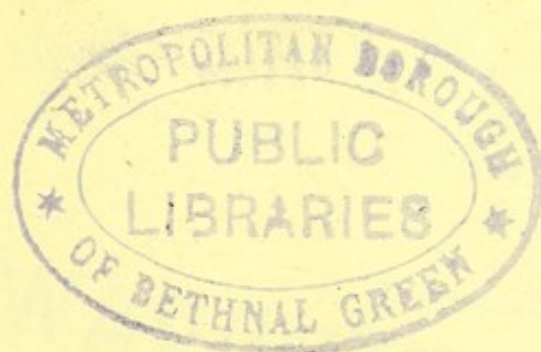
PITMAN'S TRADERS' HANDBOOKS

GROCERY

BY

W. F. TUPMAN

LECTURER ON GROCERY TECHNIQUE
TO THE
MERCHANT VENTURERS' TECHNICAL COLLEGE, BRISTOL, 1908-9
FELLOW OF THE INSTITUTE OF CERTIFICATED GROCERS



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PREFACE

THAT urgent need exists for some form of supplemental training, in order thoroughly to equip those who desire to attain proficiency in the Grocery, Provision, and Allied Trades, has long been apparent to all influential employers. During the past four years evening classes for the purpose have been conducted in various educational centres with marked success. So progressive is the movement that already an Institute of Certificated Grocers has been formed, one of the principal objects being to increase facilities, to broaden scope, and to proffer every encouragement by a judicious system of awards.

It is primarily with the view of rendering some slight assistance in this connection that the brief volume now submitted is issued. No attempt has been made to go beyond the rudimentary stage, or to indulge in ambitious literary efforts, but rather to embody, in a series of short, simple sections, such items of elementary information, gathered during a lengthy business experience, as may be serviceable to the novice, the apprentice, and the junior employee.

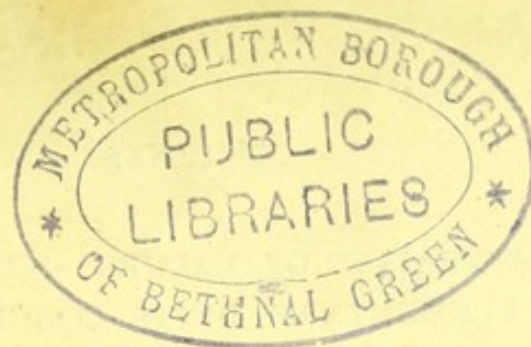
The hope is further entertained that the work may not only prove useful in the text-book sense, but also that assistants in rural districts, where extra instruction has not hitherto been imparted, may find it a help, however small, towards the attainment of efficiency in service.

For much kindly assistance rendered, and for hearty encouragement given by Professor J. Wertheimer, B.Sc., B.A., etc., etc., Principal of the Merchant Venturers' Technical College, Bristol; Mr. T. R. Davies and Mr. T. Charlwood Whitwill, Lecturers on Commercial Subjects

to that Institution; and by Messrs. John Williams, Wm. Martineau, Geo. Nicholls, J. A. Sharwood, and J. Aubrey Rees, Chairman, Members, and Secretary respectively on the Governing Council, Institute of Certificated Grocers, the writer's best thanks and full appreciation are herewith sincerely tendered.

W. F. TUPMAN.

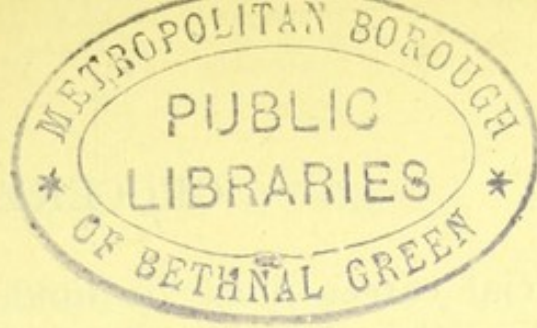
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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	THE GROCERY BUSINESS AS A LIFE'S VOCATION, AND THE PROSPECT IT AFFORDS	1
II.	THE IMPORTANCE OF APPRENTICESHIP AS COM- PARED WITH IRREGULAR MODES OF TRADE ENTRY	9
III.	THE ELEMENTARY STAGES OF SERVICE	16
IV.	EARLY DUTIES TO BE PERFORMED	27
V.	GENERAL INFORMATION BEARING ON COUNTER WORK	36
VI.	CLERICAL DUTIES AND OFFICE ROUTINE	46
VII.	ON THE COUNTER	56
VIII.	ANOTHER STAGE FORWARD. THE PROVISION RELIEF	64
IX.	FIRST LESSONS IN STOCK-KEEPING	73
X.	THE ROUNDSMAN'S DUTIES	79
XI.	THE ORDER COUNTER AND GENERAL DESPATCH OF GOODS	85
XII.	THE APPRAISAL OF VALUES. I. FOUR LEADING LINES. TEA, COFFEE, COCOA, AND SUGAR	97
XIII.	THE APPRAISAL OF VALUES—(CONTINUED) II. HINTS CONCERNING PULSE, RICE, AND CEREALS GENERALLY	110
XIV.	THE APPRAISAL OF VALUES—(CONTINUED) III. DRIED FRUITS	124
XV.	THE APPRAISAL OF VALUES—(CONTINUED) IV. SPICES	139

CHAP.		PAGE
XVI.	THE APPRAISAL OF VALUES—(CONTINUED)	
	V. ELEMENTARY HINTS CONCERNING DRY-SALTERIES, OILS, SUNDRIES, AND PROPRIETARY ARTICLES	149
XVII.	THE FIRST HAND: GROCERY	161
XVIII.	THE LEADING PROVISION HAND	
	I. THE BACON QUESTION	169
XIX.	THE LEADING PROVISION HAND—(CONTINUED)	
	II. HAMS, CHEESE, BUTTER, AND LARD	188
XX.	THE MANAGER	203
XXI.	THE QUESTION OF PROPRIETORSHIP	
	I. SUGGESTIONS AS TO PROCEDURE	218
XXII.	THE QUESTION OF PROPRIETORSHIP—(CONTINUED)	
	II. SUPPLEMENTARY HINTS IN AID	233
	BACON PRICING	249
	CASH-BOOK FOLIO	250-251
	PETTY CASH-BOOK FOLIO	252
	TRADING ACCOUNT	253
	BALANCE SHEET	254
	BACON CUTS (ILLUSTRATED) <i>inset facing page</i>	178



GROCERY

CHAPTER I

THE GROCERY BUSINESS AS A LIFE'S VOCATION, AND THE PROSPECT IT AFFORDS

WHATEVER career may be contemplated by a youth who is just entering upon life's battle, it becomes him to study thoroughly the ramifications thereof, and the possible developments connected therewith. No success in any calling can be achieved without that elementary knowledge which serves as a basis for extended investigation; ultimate effort is foredoomed to comparative failure unless grounded upon theoretical and practical information, blended in the requisite proportion, which not only conveys facts and ideas as to the preliminary conditions of service, but also points out, so far as is possible, the requisite modes of progression by means of which a definite end can be attained. Some forms of business are necessarily narrow in scope and objective; others proffer innumerable facilities for inquiry and research. In the former instance, specialisation is imperative; in the latter, all round utility is of vital importance. But certain vocations combine both necessities, and the allied trader's calling is unique in this particular. It is open to the novice to specialise in one specific sense, or in numberless minor channels. An unlimited field for study is opened up; the more it is investigated the better, personally and pecuniarily, for the individual concerned. Nevertheless, there must be no misapprehension at the outset. The foundation upon which the edifice is to be constructed must be solid concrete. The inception of a

commercial career must be fundamentally sound. Efficiency for either the Allied Trader or his assistant implies at the very beginning determination to excel. The preliminary stages demand unwearying application, persistent endeavour, and that devotion to spade work which no petty discouragements can be permitted to check.

Therefore, care must be taken to understand thoroughly what is actually expected. Notwithstanding the fact that the Grocer and Allied Trader, or to be really explicit, the retail general distributor of products for the household, is an absolutely indispensable factor to the community at large, few, if any, of the purchasing public are inclined to give adequate consideration to the position he holds. Far too much is regarded in the matter-of-fact sense. It is confidently assumed by the thoughtless, that capacity to undertake certain routine work is the only essential necessary to the trader who supplies their needs. In the main they fail utterly to realise that efficiency in this respect demands business aptitude of the highest order ; intelligent discrimination in the keenest commercial sense ; and such knowledge of food products generally and their dietetic values as is vouchsafed to few outside the domain occupied by medical experts.

The consequence is that the prospect opening out before a youth who decides upon entering the grocery trade, and making it a means of livelihood, has never hitherto been fairly reviewed. When, as frequently happens, controversy arises over the question, " What shall we do with our sons ? " no advocate can be found bold enough to suggest their being trained for, and becoming, competent grocers in the fulness of time. Let any would-be adviser but hint at the business to paterfamilias or guardian who is anxious concerning the future of a youth under his control, and he will probably be met by the rejoinder, " No good at all, excessive hours of labour, remuneration of the scantiest type, and ultimate prospects pitifully poor."

Such assertions in a strictly limited sense are true. None the less they embody a series of half-truths, which are infinitely more difficult to combat than a statement which is palpably incorrect. Before forming a definite opinion it is incumbent upon investigators to take a wholly dispassionate view; to weigh the pros and cons, the advantages and disadvantages, from the strictly judicial aspect; and to base their premises upon indisputable facts.

To say, for instance, in tones of good-humoured contempt that the grocery business is no good at all, indicates but the ignorance born of prejudice. On the contrary, both principals and employees connected therewith render services of the greatest possible utility. The manner in which the needs of the purchasing public are met, the energy and enterprise which are displayed in gathering together for their benefit merchandise from the uttermost parts of the earth, the personal consideration extended to even the humblest customer, and the care generally bestowed, are entitled to, and should receive, the fullest possible recognition. The grocer's trade existence depends upon his becoming, in the strict sense, a public benefactor. He is certainly justified in claiming the same consideration from his patrons as he himself extends to them.

That the hours of labour are excessive must be regretfully admitted. The onus lies principally with thoughtless purchasers, petty and incompetent shopkeepers, and in a few minor instances, with selfish and inconsiderate employers. Perhaps among the worst offenders in this respect are assistants who have passed to small proprietorship. Anxious to turn over as much money as possible, they postpone the closing hour unduly; failing utterly to see that such a course is not only detrimental to themselves, but also a source of common danger. Even here, however, conditions are not so gloomy as is generally imagined. In many instances improvement has been effected;

undoubtedly now reform is in the air. At present a weekly afternoon for rest and recreation prevails in most districts. The National Association of Grocers' Assistants has done much to discourage late shopping, particularly within the Metropolitan radius, and is perpetually engaged in conducting a vigorous propaganda with a view to ameliorating the lot of those employed behind the counter. Not only so, but all the principal employers, in their official capacities as members of the various Trades Associations, are pressing home the necessity for legislation in this direction. This undoubtedly is the essential need, and every reason exists to hope that, before long, the length of time which shops may keep open shall be definitely and finally fixed.

The question of remuneration must be dealt with delicately but frankly. Low salaries are certainly the rule rather than the exception, but why? One reason is the unfortunate and unwise tendency of both multiple concerns and certain classes of individual traders to employ the cheapest types of labour. Another arises from the fact that the cutting propensities prevailing among reckless competitors narrow profits down to the lowest possible point compatible with existence. None the less, candour necessitates the admission that much of the responsibility here rests with the assistants themselves. Their apparent concern lies in getting a little more, rather than in endeavouring to make themselves worth more than they get. Opportunities for self-improvement, which abound on every hand, are far too often neglected. Apathy prevails where enterprise and ambition should be the prominent characteristics. The fact is lost sight of that economic laws necessarily determine what a man is worth, and, as a general rule, this is approximately what he receives. To improve his position he must increase his own value. The more deeply he probes the technique of his business, the more fully he enters into everything

appertaining thereto, so much the better most certainly will be his monetary reward.

Further, it has to be remembered, that in making himself thoroughly conversant with the details of his actual business, the assistant not only bids fair to brighten his own prospects behind the counter, but also that the knowledge thus acquired opens the door to wider possibilities of an even more lucrative nature. For instance, a very large number, quite one-half or two-thirds, of the commercial travellers now upon the road, representing various manufacturers and wholesale firms, have acquired their elementary business training as shop-assistants. They have been astute enough to perceive the utility of early preparation for after fuller scope, and thus render themselves fit and ready to seize the first favourable opportunity. The indifferent and thoughtless fail here simply through not possessing the preliminary foresight and definiteness of aim. It is not the slightest use blaming the business generally for lack of opportunity, when opportunity is knocking at the door. But the individual must be adequately prepared to receive her. She is chary of calling twice. To be ever ready, to be prepared by being fully equipped at every point, should be the dominant influencing desire.

Again, there are certain public appointments which can only be satisfactorily filled by those possessing a knowledge of grocery technique. All local governing bodies require the services of competent men as inspectors to report upon, and determine the condition of, the numerous foods offered for public consumption. Obviously the man who has spent, say, ten years of his life in studying these products, in learning to appraise them correctly, and to differentiate as to the quality being good or inferior, is the most fitted to excel in this direction. Assuming that he has fully qualified himself, successful and satisfactory supervision is certain.

In addition, one reform is urgent. Alike in the interest of the trading fraternity, and in that of the community at large, it is imperative to demand that no further appointments shall be made to inspectorships under the Food and Drugs Acts unless the selected candidates hold diplomas entitling them to membership of the Institute of Certificated Grocers. Probably no enactments were ever drafted more in the interest of the consumers' welfare than these Acts at their various stages; certainly none have ever been more characterised by crass ineptitude in their actual carrying out. Innocent men have been pilloried and persecuted; valuable time has been wasted on trumpery charges; erroneous and pedantic opinion has concerned itself with obeying the letter of the law, while the spirit has been utterly ignored. Sophistication or adulteration of food by the retail trader is an offence so rare as to be practically untraceable, yet he, as distributor, has invariably to bear the punishment for malpractices committed by others. This sort of procedure has no place in British polity. Ideas of fair play by it are disregarded; lack of common sense becomes painfully evident. The plain fact is that inspectors have never yet been trained for the work. As a body they fail to grapple properly with the difficulties of the position. Their knowledge of food products is not, as a rule, sufficient to enable them to go direct to the root of a complex problem. The direct outcome is chaos and failure, to the detriment of the common weal. But when, in due course, men who thoroughly understand the exigencies of the situation perform these offices, the whole business will be carried out on efficient and practical lines, with results that cannot fail to benefit materially all concerned. Thoughtful assistants, therefore, may well consider the possibilities the suggestion affords.

A similar line of argument, even if not quite so pronounced, may be advanced concerning inspectorships under the

Weights and Measures Acts. Here, again, opportunity is afforded the skilled grocer's assistant to adapt himself to public requirements. During his novitiate exactness at scale, acquaintance with well nigh every type of weighing machine, thorough familiarity with the component parts of each, study of break and balancing, together with the major clauses of the Act itself, must of necessity be acquired. Such mechanical skill as is necessary entails but a little supplemental training, and an inspector thoroughly conversant with his duties is ready to hand. This point needs emphasis and consideration.

Nor is the scope for a qualified assistant limited to these. The grocer's training, properly conducted, fits him for innumerable posts. Hotel and restaurant management, positions of responsibility connected with refreshment contractors, and the catering trade generally; possible lucrative pay for the qualities of mind and organisation necessitated by the victualling of large bodies of men flit within the purview. Let but the desire for all-round capability combined with comprehensive trade knowledge be thoroughly instilled, determination to succeed and success itself will assuredly follow, whatever the line chosen.

In all probability, however, it is within the confines of orthodox business that the novice will wish to develop. Here, also, there is ample opportunity for enterprise. At twenty-five the thoroughly-trained man should be ready to take a responsible post. Given a suitable business he ought then to be worth from thirty-five to forty shillings weekly, and, if an expert provision hand, even more. From leading assistant to branch management is but a stage. Or opportunity may be found for directing energies to the wholesale trade. Saleroom assistants, heads of departments, buyers, and so on are oftentimes recruited from the retailer's staff. Even the dilatory can perceive these opportunities. Men of mettle grasp them directly they come within reach.

Yet discrimination is necessary. Permanent success rarely comes at a bound. Whatever course is outlined, perseverance is imperative. Even if, at the outset, discouraging conditions seem overwhelming the beginner must not quail.

His attention must be concentrated on the attainment of efficiency. The word must be further regarded in the broadest and most comprehensive sense. To be expert in one connection, and to ignore the facilities proffered by others, indicates the narrow mind. Broad views, toleration, cultivated inherent capacity to master details of an all-round type: these are the factors which make for success. Every preliminary attempt must receive its full meed of consideration; every duty and detail be allotted its specific sphere. Slowly, stage by stage, the work of qualification must proceed.

Enough has been said to prove that from the grocery business may be wrested a livelihood; hints have been dropped as to how proficiency therein may be regarded as a stepping-stone to further efforts. To outline the best methods of procedure; to instruct the learner how to proceed in order to ensure a satisfactory result, becomes now perforce the main objective.

CHAPTER II

THE IMPORTANCE OF APPRENTICESHIP AS COMPARED WITH IRREGULAR MODES OF TRADE ENTRY

ASSUMING next that a lad, with the full consent of his parents or guardians, has definitely decided upon adopting one branch or the other connected with the allied trades for a business career, what is his first course of procedure ? The answer bristles with difficulties. Opinions vary ; controversy concerning the matter has been widespread and prolonged. To lay down a hard and fast rule is unwise, the question must be regarded judicially, and decided according to the merits or demerits advanced ; having due regard to the particular instance under consideration.

To apprentice or not to apprentice—this is the point which perplexes the responsible. One school of thought urges that the indenture is indispensable ; another that it is futile and unnecessary. Reflective common sense alone can supply a satisfactory rejoinder, and discriminate wisely in a matter which is of such vital moment.

Consider first what the youth has to learn. During a period of four years or thereabouts it is incumbent upon him to master at least the preliminary details connected with the grocery and allied trades generally. Then ponder what these phrases, which are simply generic terms, really imply. Take the word grocery in its narrowest sense and endeavour, however crudely, to bring within the range of ready thought the number of commodities actually involved.

Broaden it a little and remember that practically every article of consumption, nearly all food products of importance, and well nigh every requisite for the household

calls for a share of attention. To speak of provisions is easy, to formulate mentally the area covered is a practically impossible task. Yet this subject has likewise to be faced; every important detail connected therewith acquired—and still the demand for information fanlike spreads.

The oil and colour trade must be explored for knowledge; paints and dyes have to be considered, the pleasure of the chemist has to be trespassed upon; preserved comestibles of the Italian warehouse type must be understood. The field for investigation is illimitable.

While the cynic affects to sneer at this as superabundant and unnecessary, commercial need insists that, objectors notwithstanding, it has to be done. But how? Certainly no man can teach, neither can another learn, the incumbent lesson during the time allotted.

This is readily granted, the subject is far too vast and comprehensive. None the less effort has to be made, and such efforts to embrace the elements of success must be based upon a clear assumption.

Nothing but the indenture can supply this. Perhaps of all formal documents none conveys more aptly the responsibilities implied from both the legal and moral points of view. Contracts of the ordinary type involve obligations, but the contract embodied in an indenture of apprenticeship stands alone. On the one hand, it insists upon full education, on the other, alacrity in service, supplemented by readiness and willingness to learn. Neither party can regard it in any other than the strictly binding sense; the proof of *bonâ fide* intent is absolutely convincing.

Hence the clear assumption here is that both parties shall exhibit a fair meed of competency. Teacher and taught must in turn prove qualified, one to impart, the other to receive and retain. Both may fall short in minor points but in a major sense the incumbent duties are fully

realised, clearly understood, and undertaken with deliberate intent at honest performance.

Obviously, then, the safer course to adopt is to undertake a specified term of service, during which all information obtainable should be gleaned. Caution must be exercised in selection. Business of the type which is usually termed medium class ready-money is by far the best for a beginner. Trading of this stamp is comprehensive, and avoids extremes. The hours, perhaps, may be a little longer than are altogether advisable for growing lads, but fair consideration can, as a rule, be arranged in this connection.

Given the right kind of employer and the requisite elementary business knowledge is fairly certain to be assimilated. The mere signing and sealing of the indenture brings the principal *in loco parentis* with regard to his employee. Legitimate desire to turn out a thoroughly capable hand is naturally evinced by the employer to whom the lad is bound. Such interest will be taken in the development of his abilities as to ensure that he not only receives the correct style of training in the shop itself but is also enabled to secure that supplementary education which is of the greatest possible importance. It is undoubtedly upon a dutifully-served apprenticeship, combined with taking advantage to the fullest possible extent of the opportunities which technical classes and text-books afford, that the success of the grocery employee of the future primarily rests.

There is, however, another side to the question. Complaint is often made by principals, not so much that they cannot secure would-be apprentices, but that the desired class of lads do not present themselves. The juniors who come into the trade drift there by accident rather than undertake it from deliberate intent. The consequence is that often the counter staff is recruited from the ranks of errand boys, porters, warehousemen, and so on, whose training has been perforce somewhat perfunctory, and

whose disinclination to extra study is frequently more than marked. Some few of these develop in time into assistants of first-class ability. Many others, unfortunately, remain stationary. They lack the enterprise which is indispensable to progress and are content to remain in a condition of mediocrity both as to status and remuneration. Keen business men speak of them as "undesirables." The term is quite appropriate. As a rule, their term of service is short. They drift from place to place as one after the other dispenses with their services, and unless serious effort at self-improvement is made, they not only harass principals but displease and alienate customers as well. Still, although these men deserve censure, none the less it is not fair to blame them indiscriminately. The plain fact is, that in the very earliest stages of their service nobody puts them upon the right track. Employers are indifferent, since the first hint as to usefulness generally sends them hunting for easier work. Experienced assistants do not trouble to educate these, because they lower the trade level, and depress the price of labour. Put the same lads under indentures, however, and the feeling is altogether different. Obligation to teach rests upon all concerned, and is invariably loyally recognised. Systematic training, as compared with erratic educational modes, ultimately determine proficiency or its reverse in the individual learner interested.

Care must be taken here to be quite clear. No desire exists anywhere to exclude lads from the distributing business on account of circumstances beyond their control. If intent to become expert is genuine, so-styled social status is of little moment. The boy who works his way up from carrying the basket to taking a highly responsible post is entitled to, and rightly receives, the respect and high esteem of his fellows. But such instances are rare. As a general rule, the result of careless early training has a deplorable development. Youths drift into devious ways.

Failing to equip themselves properly, they lack the capacity for sustained effort. Far too many fall back upon petty canvassing for a precarious livelihood. Some, unfortunately, swell the ranks of the permanently unemployed. In both instances the spectacle is really pathetic since the indenture may have meant all the difference between weakness and instability in creation, as compared with the vigour and determination of the astute man of business.

The whole subject, therefore, needs recasting for further full consideration. It is impossible to help feeling that assertions which indicate and imply the complete desuetude of apprenticeship are somewhat premature. Such a condition of entry and service has certainly been deplorably neglected; the obvious advantages connected therewith have not of late been sufficiently impressed upon those primarily interested. Principals and employees alike have been far too ready to assume that the system is defunct. On the contrary, it is but lying dormant and needs re-quickenning into life. No reasonable persons expect to revert to the exact conditions of twenty to thirty years ago. Living in has little or no part in present-day arrangements: the exaction of heavy premiums can certainly never be again enforced. None the less, no earthly reason exists why the expert grocer shall not say to either parent or guardian, "Send your lad to me by all means, providing he is willing and you consider it advisable; but let our understanding be clear. His time of service must be distinctly specified; four years for preference. During this period our interests will be identical. In return for his assistance, rendered on equitable terms, my very best shall be done to educate him in the broadest commercial sense." This is the mode of procedure which should characterise the future.

Another point remains for emphasis. Where apprenticeship is fully and faithfully served it is not fair for

employers to allow youths to sever themselves directly from the business wherein trained unless a fresh opening of a desirable character presents itself. One reason why the indenture has been so much disregarded of late lies in the fact that lads when "out of their time" were retained no longer, but simply allowed to drift away and look after themselves. But on the man who has trained the apprentice and cannot justifiably retain him rests the responsibility of seeing that he secures a progressive position elsewhere, aided, of course, by the enterprise of the young man himself. No fair-minded principal desires to act otherwise. Some, unfortunately, are indifferent and thoughtless. Yet to bear the golden rule in mind and to endeavour to carry out its precepts never yet harmed anyone. Let then the matter be properly regarded all round, and the indenture will yet remain a practical force.

Nor should the youth himself be too anxious to get away. The first situation means far more than is evident at first sight. It affords in all probability his only opportunity for selecting his own berth. Later experience may bring enforced acceptance. Care then must be taken to ascertain that it is an appropriate one, presenting fair prospect of ultimate development, and service with the right stamp of present-day employer. Far better remain where he is for a short while and wait for a suitable opening than be tempted by a little extra wage to undertake duties of a type that cannot possibly become congenial and which may probably seriously prejudice his future career. Legitimate scope for advancement and facility to prove adequate fitness are, for the first situation, absolutely indispensable.

Before the actual start is made, therefore, this matter must be carefully considered. Few, if any, will assert that desultory method is better than definite purpose. Reflection can hardly fail to convince that a clear understanding

is advisable and the customary trial month should enable both contracting parties to appraise each other mentally ere their mutual obligations are formally assumed.

Neither must the fact be ignored that the Institute of Certificated Grocers has recently decided to extend the privileges of membership to those who have served a four years' indentured apprenticeship, providing they shall so conduct themselves, in other respects, as to meet with the general approval of the Governing Council. The Diploma thus conferred forms an honour in itself, and in addition cannot fail to be of marked utility to employees whose earnest desire is to make their trade careers progressive.

Whatever decision may be arrived at, the need for determination remains. In most vocations petty discouragements are usually encountered at the outset, and the grocery business affords no exception to this rule. Much of the work is hard and laborious ; it must be cheerfully undertaken and carried through. Certain duties may prove irksome but no impatience or lack of tolerance can be permitted. Thorough intent must be the guiding principle, earnestness the abiding aim. Would-be wise-aces, who should know better, will often refer to the assistant in the distributing trades as a kind of nondescript whose position in the social economy is too vague to determine. Puerile expressions of this kind may well be disregarded. The expert assistant stands on exactly the same plane as the skilled artisan ; he is just as indispensable to the general community. In every respect, then, let him evince pride in his calling and extend to himself that self-respect which shall inevitably compel others to respect him in turn.

CHAPTER III

THE ELEMENTARY STAGES OF SERVICE

MOST men carry in memory their first day of actual work. There is generally a feeling, half of pleasure, half of pathos and regret in recalling events that may have transpired at this particular juncture. But despite experience gained, comparatively few take the trouble to advise a boy who is just starting how best to comport himself. The prevalent impression, apparently, is that lessons of self-reliance and capacity to hold one's own are best learned by allowing beginners to fit themselves in, and exhibit adaptability to circumstances as occasion may require.

To some extent this view may be tolerated, yet hints as to what may be expected of a lad, and how best he can fulfil his duties, cannot fail to be of service. With all the complications which mastering the grocery business entail opening out before him, any point in aid, however minor, should be acceptable. In addition to business education, those responsible should pay full attention to the formation and development of character. Success depends upon that training which combines the two in the most acceptable form.

Punctuality is imperative. Then it is necessary to cultivate that plasticity which readily concurs with the requirements of the moment, thus enabling beginners to glean information, and lay the foundations of proficiency at the very outset. Minute precautions should be taken to avoid the acquisition of undesirable habits. Modern business does not allow time to be wasted in idle conversation or in the discussions of topics outside the province of the duties in hand. A courteous request for information is certain to bring the knowledge required in such a manner

as to firmly impress it upon the mind, but an assumption of superiority may provoke a well deserved snub. However brilliant a youth may be, and whatever his scholastic attainments, the hard and practical side of the distributing business can only be gathered by beginning at the lowest rung of the ladder and slowly, albeit steadily, climbing upwards. The views and opinions of the apprentice matter little to the man of experience, save in so far that they may occasionally engender fresh ideas. Quietly expressed, the resultant effect may be beneficial; dogmatically uttered, the reverse is the case. To learn, not to teach, and to understand clearly the paramount necessity for this, forms the preliminary lesson.

Reputation must be built up and maintained for sterling integrity in the most comprehensive sense. For perhaps the first time in his life the lad becomes the custodian of another's property. He needs to realise this to the full. The avoidance of extravagant usage and waste; the care necessary to devote in order that all goods may be properly handled and dealt with in such manner as to ensure satisfactory results to the consumer; the fact that every little mission is important and may mean satisfaction or the direct opposite to a valued customer; these and kindred thoughts must be borne in mind. Neatness in attire should be combined with care to omit aught approaching ostentation. Rings are entirely out of place. Smoking during the day cannot be commended, while the cigarette habit, which inevitably results in nicotine-stained fingers, is positively abhorrent.

Indiscriminate tasting is a habit to be fought against. Many lads have a sweet tooth, and the temptation to sample dainties proves too strong for resistance. As a rule, it passes away when the products become familiar, although some men never really disassociate themselves from the practice. Obviously, then, moral stamina is indispensable at the commencement. Reflection will convince that this

habit really involves petty pilfering of an objectionable type, and may if unchecked lead to serious leakage. If the mind is but sternly set against it from the outset, a valuable point has been gained, and an impetus in the right direction given which will prove invaluable as events develop.

In all probability the beginner will first be placed on what is termed the stock counter. That is to say, he will be deputed to assist those of the staff who are responsible for keeping the fixtures filled with general grocery lines, such as sugars, dried fruits, rice, drysalteries, etc., in packages of specified weights, ready for either handing over the counter to purchasers, or utilization in the order department. Despite the fact that nowadays far too many goods come to hand ready packed, the bulk thus prepared in the shop itself is very heavy and the utmost care is necessary. Difference between profit and loss rests far more upon the exercise of skill and ability in this direction than is generally imagined or understood.

As a rule, indication of desire to learn how a parcel may be neatly wrapped is the first sign of quickening interest. This is quite commendable, and is almost universally encouraged. But it is not well to start with this; the elementary point lies in ascertaining how to efficiently weigh.

For if correctness at scale is fostered at the start, the novice seldom degenerates into a careless weigher. Let it be assumed then, that a bag of granulated sugar, weighing two hundred weight, has to be dealt with, and placed ready for sale or despatch in one pound packets. This commodity is generally wrapped in blue paper of the size known as Royal Hand, or for distinction's sake Blue Royal, each sheet of which measures twenty inches by twenty-five. Occasionally the paper is purchased ready cut to the requisite size, but more often it is delivered in parcels of one ream, implying twenty quires of twenty-four sheets

each, each of the latter dividing into four one pound wraps. Men who are dexterous will take a half-quire, press down the crease where the full sheet is folded with the thumb nail, tear in two and then again sub-divide. But the amateur will be better advised to cut his paper into the required four sections. The edges are thus more even, and no risk of spoiling by a clumsy tear is involved. Also it has to be noted that there are two sides to the paper, one rough, the other smooth and glazed. Obviously the rough side must be uppermost in order that it may be inside the parcel. A smooth surface then presents itself for deft manipulation and comfort in wrapping.

To ensure the cut paper coming readily to hand, it is customary to star-shape the bulk pile. This can be accomplished either through imparting a rotary motion to the upper pieces by means of the thumb nail or by manipulating with the palm of the hand on the counter edge. It should next be placed within easy reach of the weigher's left hand. Taking the scoop in his right, with the left he places the paper, rough side uppermost, on the scale pan and proceeds to weigh, placing the sugar as near as possible in the centre of the paper. It is unwise to be hasty at the start, speed increases naturally with practice, but accuracy is the first desideratum. To attain this, the scoop should be held firmly but with not too rigid a grip, the tip of the thumb just pressing the top edge of the bowl. Just a trifle more than sufficient sugar should be taken up at a time in order to avoid the double dip, yet the utensil must not be overloaded. Almost simultaneously with putting the paper on the scales the left hand slips, finger tips upwards, under the pan and the slightest tendency to break is immediately detected. The result is that the novice is able in a very short time to weigh in a satisfactory manner. No clumsiness is evinced. The business is effectively performed in about three practically spontaneous motions, and with well nigh the rapidity of thought.

But it must be properly done even if extra time and trouble are expended in learning adequately how. To watch some juniors weigh is painful. First they put on, then take off, too much, thereby wasting time. Others adopt the slap-dash method, which appears smart, but is in reality the directly opposite. In a very brief time the apprentice who commences aright can keep two, sometimes three assistants supplied with pounds to wrap. And the work is done to a hair. The scale balances; then gets just a grain in the customer's favour to ensure a slight break. Proprietors and purchasers alike receive their equitable dues.

Certain minor points must be borne in mind. The scoop should be clean and thoroughly dry to ensure free running. Slovenliness has to be avoided, since nothing is more detrimental to neat and effective work than getting the sugar about. Scales become sticky and hang; weights get tarnished, and general inconvenience occurs. Both the mahogany stand and the under side of the pans must be clean and polished bright. In proportion to the keenness of attention devoted to these oft-styled minor details is the outcome of really satisfactory results. The counter itself must be absolutely free from dust. While wrapping, slight spills are occasionally unavoidable, but a small piece of stiff cardboard may be used to scrape the sugar into the half-finished parcel, hence every precaution must be observed to see that it has no chance of getting soiled.

In districts where "cupping" prevails, methods are necessarily somewhat different. This custom necessitates the pound papers being first turned into cone or cup-shaped receptacles which, after being filled, are often weighed in hand scales. The mode imposes rather a severe strain upon the left arm during the weighing process, but it has the merit of being exact to the minutest detail. Apart from this, however, there are certain objections. The packages do not fit so well for parcelling, and no saving of time is really effected. Still it is as well to understand it.

Those who are ambidextrous, will turn and fasten the cup with the left hand ; it has been asserted that this is the strictly correct manner. But the majority use the right. The paper is folded round with the left hand till even at the top, pressed flat between the right finger and thumb at the tapered end ; then a half-turn taken and the extreme point neatly pressed inward with the thumb. To be secure, it should stand the strain of the fingers spread-eagled on the inside. Instruction connected with the turning and weighing of cups and with regard to wrapping generally is extremely difficult to convey by description. Therefore it must be recognised that hints only can be imparted here. They must, to be effective, be supplemented by practical demonstration.

Flat-wrapping, being more generally adaptable, should be the first style acquired. Even to wrap a pound of sugar, two requisites are essential, security and neatness. The far edge of the paper should be taken with the right hand, the near with the left, and the two brought together for the fold. Here, however, a slight difference of opinion prevails. Some urge that the inner edge should be about half-an-inch above the outer ; others that they should exactly and evenly meet. Strictly speaking, it matters little ; still the latter course is commended since if the former is adopted, unless the edges are exactly parallel the finished parcel has a tendency to taper, becoming narrower at one end than the other. After the fold the sugar is temporarily held by a slight turn with the left hand, the parcel brought upright, slightly shaken ; neatly tucked in at the top end ; turned over ; the other end fastened in a similiar way and the process is complete. No string is necessary. The creasing must be clean and sharp, with no accumulations in the interstices. This properly done the package secures itself.

Other methods of flat-wrapping, however, need twine to ensure security. With tea, for instance, the ends are

generally folded over transversely ; string is passed longitudinally over the parcel, then turned and tied across the middle. Pepper and other fine goods require another mode of fastening on account of their leaky tendency. The ends are carefully turned over on the side away from the wrapper, and the envelope-flap thus formed is again folded, thereby precluding all possibility of the contents escaping. Small parcels of this latter class are better tied lengthwise only, as string across the centre, if tightly drawn, has a tendency to cut through the paper.

As a rule, the attainment of dexterity in actual cup-wrapping is only acquired after considerable practice. At least three styles of finish are in vogue, two of which are unimportant, namely, the strap in which the elongated end of the cup is held away from the wrapper the sides folded over ; the long flap pressed down and tucked under to secure ; and the double fold which is accomplished by holding in the contrary position turning down the long flap, pressing the end well into the parcel then folding over either side and tucking in with the same motion as in the case of a flat wrap. But both these methods are limited in usage. The popular and by far the best way is to take the cup in the right hand long end nearest, and with the left hold it in shape by means of the finger and thumb, so directed as to point toward the wrapper. The contents are then shaken into a slightly uphill slant while the first three fingers of the right hand press the flap smoothly and evenly along the surface, sending the far end well down by curving at the tips. The left fold next comes right across the top in such a manner that the right fold grips it. Tucking in follows. A cup thus fastened can be hung on a pencil or penholder and swung round. Well finished, it should safely bear the strain. Candour compels the admission that assistants with long tapering fingers have the advantage over their fellows as far as neatly finishing the cup, or indeed any other style of wrap

is concerned. Large-handed men may be smart and dexterous, but thick fingers are undoubtedly a handicap and a deterrent to delicate finish.

Dried fruit for some reasons is preferable to sugar as a practising medium, but, save at certain seasons, nothing like the same quantity is dealt with, hence opportunity for experiment does not so frequently occur. For this the paper used is slightly larger, as an ordinary pound blue royal wrap is of insufficient size to hold the requisite contents effectively. Most principals concur in regarding three colours of this paper necessary ; buff, print, and blue in order to differentiate between sultanas, currants, and raisins respectively. Whatever colour is identified with one particular product, the original decision arrived at should be adhered to, as alteration often leads to minor errors of an irritating type which are detrimental in the business sense.

Comparatively few grocers now require rice or kindred articles to be flat-wrapped in one pound parcels. The prevailing and more commendable custom is to use thin but tough bags of varying colours. Time is thus economised, little or no spilling occurs, while the extra cost is of a trifling nature. The principal detail requiring attention in this connection is to fold the top of the bags so as to fasten securely in order that, plus the string, leakage is practically impossible.

For larger parcels, from two pounds up to twenty-eight, or on rare occasions, fifty-six, bags are invariably used. These are offered and utilised in an almost bewildering variety of shape and colour. The latter point matters little but the former is rather an important consideration. So-called satchel-bags are favourites to some extent, and the demand for these appears to be increasing. Doubtless some buyers have good cause for this, and controversy is not permissible here. But practical experience, none the less, usually decides in favour of the square-bottomed type.

Reasons for this are manifold. As a rule, they are more substantial and reliable, tougher and stouter in the base, and more readily adaptable to different circumstances. They can be wrapped in several ways rapidly and effectively, and almost invariably pack well in lockers of any shape. Not only so, but the packages are generally neater and more attractive.

The style of wrapping these bags is usually determined by the contents. For Demerara, soft sugars, or close lying products, all that is necessary is to hold the seam next the wrapper, and with a sharp one, two, three motion press down the front, crease the right fold, then the left and bring over the flap. Or, as an alternative, press both thumbs along the surface, pull over the farther side and turn up the two "dog's ears." In the latter instance, however, the seam must be either to the right or left, and the crease nearest the person, or when tied the parcel will be insecure at the base. But with fine-running goods, such as granulated, caster sugar or rice, after creasing the bag in the manner last indicated, the top ends must be brought together, then securely and neatly folded, otherwise a tendency to leakage will be evinced.

To tie properly is imperative. Most wrappers, after finishing, turn bags upside down on the counter. This is the correct procedure, and has a double-barrelled result. Firstly, the wrap is thereby pressed into position, secondly, the parcel comes properly to hand for fastening with string. The twine should be taken in both hands, the end to the right pulled firmly over the exact centre of the bag at the base and the parcel then turned over. One knot is best for all purposes. Some term it the grocer's, but strictly speaking it is that nautically known as the "figure of eight." Every schoolboy is familiar with it either by observation or illustration as, loosely drawn, it is invariably used on shipboard to prevent the end of a rope running through block or eye. The grocer's knot differs from

this only in that it is tied over the other string to form a running noose. If care is taken this means that the end is quite short. In drawing tight, the parcel should be nursed a little to prevent snapping, and the end then secured by a short half-bight turn. Thus manipulated no waste of cordage occurs, while the finish is neat and effective. The string should afterwards be severed by cutting as near to the parcel as possible. A small keen-bladed knife or scissors without sharp points are indispensable to the stock counter, and are best fastened thereto for safety's sake. Snapping the string over the finger which some assistants regard as a smart and jaunty act must be sternly tabooed. The practice is not only untidy and unnecessary, but deplorably wasteful. A long end is invariably left, and with a business in which the strictest economy is absolutely essential, even the slightest tendency to extravagance cannot be tolerated.

The parcelling of miscellaneous goods will receive consideration later. But it is permissible here to note that practically everything packed bears the shape of what is known in geometrical parlance as a rectangular parallelepiped. Save for the ordinary biscuit tin, concerning the exact suitability of which opinions vary considerably, the approximate cube is practically unknown in the trade. Experience and practice alike bear witness to the suitability of the shape adopted, and beginners must bear this in mind. Security and neatness will then culminate in superior style and finish, and a good parcel invariably commends itself. Some unfortunately regard these details as unnecessary and are content to just bang things together. But the error is a grave one to fall into. The beginner who takes a pride in mastering minor points, is stepping forward, often half unconsciously in the right direction, and to the keen eye of the manager or principal, pleasure is thereby afforded. Effective finish is noted as a point to the good. The lad is evidently shaping well. In due

course it will be found that the care taken in this direction will expand into consistent service, when even more responsible duties are assumed, since pains taken at the beginning implies that thought and attention will characterise every effort at self-improvement and each attempt at building up a sound and reliable commercial experience. There is an American adage which says that "The man who can well grease an axle makes the best Railroad President." Much truth underlies the humour of this. It may well be paraphrased by saying that "The assistant who can well finish a parcel must in time be able to complete effectually any business engagement, however important, upon which his developed attention is concentrated."

CHAPTER IV

EARLY DUTIES TO BE PERFORMED

It does not, as a rule, take the beginner long to discover that the comparatively pleasant duties of the stock counter are supplemented by intermediate work which is not always of a congenial nature. On the way this work is undertaken and regarded much depends. That much is of a menial character there is no attempt to gainsay. But the whole must be faced in a broad and tolerant spirit ; the absolute necessity for due performance has to be strongly pressed home. To be hasty and inconsiderate, to consider oneself as above this sort of thing while affecting to despise it as drudgery, is a certain bar to advancement. The youth who thoughtfully appraises both his vocation and himself will readily see that mastery of all these details is necessary. Unless he thoroughly grips them, quite unimportant though they may appear, his capacity for adequately instructing others in the future will be limited, and in the event of proprietorship he will be to some extent at a loss in determining efficiency or otherwise on the part of his staff. Moreover, from the very nature of things, actual performance of this work is but transitory. As soon as details are mastered the business is, as a rule, handed over to the last new comer, who has to be educated and brought on in turn. Without cavil, in every minor point the aim should be thoroughness. No better advice can be tendered the novice than to "Shirk no service however irksome." In every detail there is a lesson to be learned.

Take, for example, the question of window-cleaning. Bright and well polished plate-glass is one of the principal features in a modern store. Yet comparatively few men

will really take the trouble to treat it properly. Some have no idea beyond smothering the pane with a mixture of whiting and water, and just rubbing it off again. Others simply wash with clean water and wipe.

Neither method is really effective nor suitable. While whiting may loosen grease and dust it invariably smears the woodwork and leaves an untidy impression. Minute particles permeate the atmosphere making after results unpleasant. Mere washing and wiping but indicates half-heartedness. Brilliant surfaces are indispensable.

To ensure them is after all quite an easy task. When the window is clear, the whole of the interior woodwork and fittings must be carefully gone over with a painter's duster, special attention being paid to the crevices. The dust thus gathered should be placed in a convenient receptacle and taken straightway to the bin provided for the purpose. Then, using an old but perfectly clean sponge, the glass must be well washed with hot water into which a few drops of liquid ammonia, or failing this, a little common soda, has been placed. Fly specks, grease smears, or rain splashes are by this means easily removed, and a clean surface assured. Afterward the whole is gone over with the chamois leather wetted in hot water but wrung almost to the point of dryness. Polishing follows. Either a clean soft duster or paper may be used. Many advocate the latter, but the cloth is really better. So long as it is free from lint, and ordinary care be taken, a satisfactory result is certain.

During the winter months, when windows are apt to become steamy, a little methylated spirit is sometimes used to counteract this. But it is really best to ensure immunity from cloudiness by judiciously arranged ventilation, combined if necessary with warmth from a gas jet to dry off. The spirit certainly acts as a slight deterrent, but frequently, after its application, even a wintry sun will embellish the glass with a sort of rainbow-like effect

in prismatic colours, which however pleasing to the artistic eye, is far from attractive in the commercial sense.

Even hard British plate-glass is not fool proof and many scratched panes bear eloquent testimony to this effect. Striking advertisements often appear on the windows of up-to-date stores, the media being a well-designed poster fixed by adhesive matter to the glass outside. It is when these are removed that mischief occurs. Lads who know no better slightly damp them, then scrape off with a knife. This course persisted in means ruin to the plate. Scraping in any shape or form should be strictly forbidden. Complete saturation is the only mode permissible for removal of these posters. When thoroughly permeated with moisture they can be rubbed off either with a cloth or the fleshy part of the palm, and the sheet is not then injured to the slightest extent.

Both sweeping and dusting fall to the lot of the beginner. Whatever broom is used, bass or hair, care must be taken to cleanse the floor effectively while raising the minimum possible quantity of dust. The last thing at night and immediately after opening in the morning are the only times for this. More can be done by coaxing the dirt out and drawing it toward the sweeper, than by driving at it in desperate fashion and smothering everybody. Wooden floors should be damped with wet sawdust, tea leaves, or by means of a fine-rosed watering pot. Linoleum or tiles must be washed, and this is hardly apprentices' work. But the accumulations in every instance should be cleared right away. Barrels and sacks of refuse are altogether out of place in the rear of either shop or warehouse. Their ultimate destination is the tip or destructor, and the sooner they are there the better.

After sweeping, counter and fixtures must be well dusted, provisions uncovered, goods on show seen to and rendered attractive, glass cases polished off and set in order, and diligent attention paid to see that there is

everything to attract and nothing to repel. From an hour to an hour-and-a-half per diem is ample time for this. By ten o'clock at the latest a spick and span appearance should be in evidence, and the whole staff at their respective posts ready and eager for the duties of the day.

One comparatively trivial matter often occasions differences between employers and apprentices, and sometimes leads to serious friction, namely the obligation to deliver parcels if required. It should, therefore, be clearly understood that to act as errand boy does not really lie within the learner's scope, and if any tendency is exhibited to take undue advantage of him in this respect he is quite justified in courteously but firmly protesting. Here again, however, there is urgent need for toleration and mutual concession. There are times when prompt delivery is all important, and if under the circumstances an apprentice volunteers with the quiet intimation, "I will gladly deliver it providing you wish me to do so," nothing is certainly lost by so doing. On the other hand, if either principal, manager, or first hand peremptorily orders him to take out a parcel, feelings are engendered which had far better remain quiescent. Courtesy, even to a junior employee, always oils the wheels of business, and whenever such a contingency occurs, the requesting party, whatever his position, should ask his subordinate to deliver as a favour, not demand him to do so as a right.

In all well-appointed grocery stores, routine work proceeds with almost machine-like regularity. To accommodate himself to this routine and to see that the incumbent duties are conscientiously and punctually performed, is another lesson the beginner has to master. By strict adherence thereto he becomes conversant with the rules appertaining to system, order, and method, thus filling the programme in well-sustained sequence. As a preliminary to stock-keeping in a comprehensive sense, it is first necessary to practise it upon a minor scale. Every

shop, however small, has in most instances, so to speak, a double stock ; one close at hand for immediate requirements, the other in warehouse or upstairs room for reserve. The former enables customers and orders to be expeditiously dealt with, the latter affords a resort for further supply, or for demands in heavy bulk.

Bringing forward then from reserve for sale necessitates such close attention to routine work as to afford excellent tuition and valuable aid in gaining experience. Every week, and the earlier in the week the better, all fixtures, bins, and receptacles generally require replenishing. If actual refilling is not necessary, supervision is always needed. Should reserves run low, note must be made directly and the matter at once reported to the stock-keeper. As a rule, he knows all about it, still it is as well to exhibit alertness. At this juncture the apprentice begins to realise how seasons affect demand. Keen frosty weather will more than double the requests for such items as cocoa, oatmeal, soup preparations, split peas, and so on ; the first touch of warm April sunshine turns customers' minds to salad-oils and creams, while running down the stock of lemonade powders and thirst-quenchers generally. All too apparent as this may be, none the less it emphasises the necessity for taking time by the forelock and being prepared for every contingency. Inexperience is generally caught napping at the beginning, but hints for ultimate guidance should be stored in the mind and care taken to see that future arrangements exhibit a little prophetic instinct. The elementary rules governing efficient stock-keeping are thus gradually acquired.

The all-important point for the stock-keeper in embryo to remember is that however bright and showy the external appearance of bin, drawer, or case may be, it is the interior condition and the care of the contents which are his immediate concern. Practically everything the grocer handles is of a perishable nature. The sooner the stock is turned

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over, and the more promptly articles go into actual consumption the better for his customers, his employees, and himself.

Many products, however, remain compulsorily on hand for fairly lengthy periods. Purchase has to be made in medium heavy lots, whereas customers buy minute quantities at infrequent intervals. These necessarily require most attention since there is nothing but absolute cleanliness and rigid inspection to guard against deterioration and subsequent loss.

If careful watch is kept there is little to fear, albeit even the slightest neglect may prove detrimental. Should the inside of any receptacle exhibit a tendency to become foul, immediate and thorough cleaning is imperative. The spider's web, which is always spun at the far corner, and is imperceptible unless the drawer is pulled right out, must be closely watched for. If stocks of spice, no matter what kind, indicate symptoms of dustiness, turn out the whole contents and thoroughly cleanse before replacing.

Coriander seed will occasionally hang somewhat together; shake it up in a clean dry sieve, before putting back into a drawer of immaculate cleanliness. Be particularly careful to see that there are no dusty accumulations at the bottom of the pickling-spice drawer; this is of the greatest importance. The wheat from which semolina is manufactured seems particularly susceptible to meal worm attacks, therefore keenly watch this. Even astute buyers are occasionally let in for a parcel of over-flowered cloves. If, therefore, heads show signs of dropping off, get them cleared with promptitude. Providing either whole white or black pepper, or pimento, are allowed to remain long without inspection minute dust particles filter through to the bottom. Out with it before mischief occurs. Dog biscuits and poultry meals, particularly in warm weather, have a fascination for the larvæ of a certain moth which is an intolerable nuisance. Only watchfulness can check this.

Innumerable other details might be cited but they all hang upon the one particular, cleanliness, in the minutest detail.

Every drawer, then, should be thoroughly cleaned at frequent intervals. Brushing and dusting out may suffice, but with this alone it often happens that corners are ineffectively dealt with. As opportunity occurs each may be thoroughly scalded out with water at boiling point, crevices well scraped, and after drying properly seen to. It may happen where fixtures are faulty that the wood will swell a little and check free running. Still it soon shrinks back to the normal, and better a tight drawer than degenerating contents. Such points may appear trivial to urge, but experience proves incontestably that in business nothing is trivial. Many pounds per annum may be saved by care in details such as these ; whereas none can foresee the ultimate result of neglect.

Vermin of all kinds are crafty foes to deal with. The depredations of rats work havoc in many a warehouse, and the only safe method to secure immunity from attack is to keep everything likely to attract them in closely-lidded bins. Mice, too, are a frequent source of trouble. They will wriggle into pretty well every drawer unless check-mated. Such commodities as bird-seeds, linseed, and even chillies, are nibbled by them to get at the dainty heart, the husk being generally rejected and the loss thereby occasioned is serious. White goods, such as rice, seed tapioca, farinas, and so on, may easily be fouled beyond selling by their excreta. Precaution is therefore incumbent, and the safest course to adopt is to fix a lid to the drawer. This can easily be done by cutting a piece of thin white deal to the requisite size, attaching a small holder thereto, and allowing it to rest on thin battens round the sides of the drawer about an inch below the top. Protection is afforded thereby in a double sense, since both vermin and dust are kept out.

Tidy fixtures are all important. Far too often goods are

therein placed in higgledy-piggledy fashion. Even experienced men, who should know better, will frequently crowd a miscellaneous assortment into a spare locker out of the way. This must not be. Certain lines get temporarily lost sight of; when wanted in a hurry nobody knows exactly where they are. Sometimes then a sale is lost, invariably provoking delay occurs. Therefore if the habit grows, commercial ineptitude becomes apparent. Consequently system and order must be adhered to. Goods of a specified type should be kept together, graduated in sizes, if necessary, and so arranged as to be conspicuous and readily accessible. The sight of three or four assistants with mutual recrimination hunting vainly for something they know full well is in stock, but the exact whereabouts of which is a puzzle, is well calculated to goad a principal to frenzy. And it is easily avoided. The youth nominally responsible must know where everything is, and in addition, what there is of it. The available stock should be photographed on his mental retina. With a little cultivation and assiduity facility in this connection is easily mastered. Practice ensures missing anything at almost a glance. Inquiry follows, affairs are adjusted, while renewal or replacement become a matter of habit.

One maxim can never wisely be disregarded. Four words will convey it, yet observance is often neglected: "Use up the old." The application should be comprehensive and general. Bear in mind that the word "old" is here used in a modified sense, it does not imply actual age. The pith of the motto is that before starting on new stock, preceding consignments must be cleared. When filling fixtures, then, what remains therein must be fetched out and placed to the front. Slightly soiled labels, proprietary articles which have, perhaps, lost a little of their external lustre, lines that are inclined to hang fire, anything in short which indicates by appearance the most trifling sign of deterioration must be promptly turned into

money. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the contents of these packages are in perfect condition, yet men acquire the habit of passing them and it calls for perpetual checking. So narrow is the margin of profit that it may be ultimately determined by selling the last one of any dozen articles. Leaving in the fixture then means loss, while ready clearance effects the opposite result. Further, adherence to the rule means that such detrimental are rarely, if ever, in evidence. Should one introduce itself here and there it as promptly goes. But neglect will certainly bring accumulations, and these are fatal to the balance-sheet. A clean stock, every item of which is saleable; such goods as have been on exhibit, re-wrapped, and put first for clearance; judiciously touching up or perhaps re-labelling a faded article; sorting and re-sorting to ensure accuracy of position; these, and numberless other duties require diligent attention. No thoughtless modes of action are permissible. Intelligent thought, keen discrimination, and determination to keep the stock as it should rightly be kept, are the lines upon which to proceed.

The apprentice will discover by the time he has equipped himself thus far that his term is slipping away. Six months to a year will have elapsed since his commencement ere the work on the stock counter, and that connected with the early stages of service and the elementary matters of routine are performed in an adequate manner. If in any respect lacking he must rest content to be kept at it a bit longer, as upon efficiency here ultimate progress mainly rests. But if his heart is in it, and due pains have been taken, the time has arrived for further instruction. Just at this period, however, habits are being formed, which have such a bearing upon after life that the importance of a thorough grounding cannot possibly be over-estimated. It must ever be borne in mind that upon willingness and zeal in the preliminary stages the whole future may depend.

CHAPTER V

GENERAL INFORMATION BEARING ON COUNTER WORK

A CONSIDERABLE number of youths hold the impression that to serve a customer is an easy task, and one to be thoughtlessly undertaken. Unfortunately for themselves the erroneous idea has germinated in their minds that business duties imply little else, and that the necessary aptitude is quite a simple matter to acquire. But by the time the routine heretofore indicated has become familiar, and practice has brought its fair meed of perfection in the actual carrying out, they begin, if reasonable, to realise how much in connection therewith has to be learned, and are fully alive to the fact that every stage of advancement must be led up to by judicious preparation. When, therefore, after a due term of probation the lad, as is natural, evinces a tendency to push himself forward, and to get into personal contact with the purchasing public, the time is ripe for him to receive complete and ample explanation and instruction as to the regulations and necessities underlying the sale of goods in order to ensure thorough satisfaction to both vendor and purchaser.

Unless special care is taken at this period, incorrect opinions are oftentimes formed and habits inculcated which have to be recast and modified in the early future. It is all important to begin aright. To know not only how to do a thing but exactly why it has to be done means far more than is apparent to some. Mental alertness is thereby stimulated and intelligent service supersedes automatic action. Hence before even beginning to serve, the learner should be carefully instructed by those responsible, and the manner in which he is to proceed most thoroughly outlined.

In many respects it is unfortunate that practically every proprietor has a system of his own. This may be, and probably is, the one which experience has proved to be most suitable in his particular instance, but there is no real reason why a definite standard should not be officially recognised. Everybody who has made minor purchases in a village store is familiar with the crude rough and ready style prevailing. Three or four items are placed upon the counter and a "Let me see, two and three are five, and four nine, and three half-pence; tenpence ha'penny, please" sort of business gone through undecidedly, often inaccurately, and generally in a hesitating manner which either makes the customer laugh or racks her nerves with impatience. Even in some city stores, especially those located in suburban areas, a kindred style of things is too often in evidence. How many errors and what an amount of dissatisfaction have been thereby entailed can never be known. Modern business has no room for this antiquated mode, and in any shop of pretension the written record of every transaction is indispensable.

Yet many assistants fail to grasp the importance of this and, especially in petty sales, regard it as tedious and unnecessary. They should, on the contrary, be the first to perceive its urgent necessity. Without this custom, no proper check could be maintained, accuracy can never be assured. It safeguards three persons from any possible risk of misapprehension, namely, the principal, his customer, and employee. Errors can be rectified with comparative ease, doubtful points elucidated and difficulties speedily cleared away. Many and varied systems are utilized by different firms, but whichever is adopted, it is the duty of beginners to familiarise themselves therewith in exhaustive detail before undertaking counter work. And whether check tills, open tills and written record, or cash desk duplicate and check are the prevailing method, rigid precaution must be taken to ensure correctness in every