

# GREAT STORE LURES AND LODESTONES

## How Trade is Made & Held by the Big Shops that draw the Crowd

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**P**A, JIMMY'S SHOES are clear out, and sister's gingham dress simply ain't fit to go to school in, and if I don't get something new myself in place of these rags, I'll simply fall to pieces, that's all."

"All right, ma. I kin spare the brown mare. You just git Jimmy to hitch up and drive you to town, and you buy what you want from Andy Lewis. He kin charge it, till the hay's cut."

That's the way America used to go to the store when some of us were children. In those days, the store's only aim was to supply its patron's needs. Andy Lewis bought and sold gingham, because he knew ma and sister would have to have it; and, for the same reason, he stocked up on good, tough calfskin shoes for Jimmy and cowhide boots for pa.

But nowadays it's different. America goes to any one store as it goes to a circus or an exposition—because it is enticed there. And the game of enticing makes the old circus look like a three-quarter eclipse of the moon. The circus, you remember, used to come round once or twice a year and put us and the kiddies in a wild state of excitement for anywhere from three to six weeks before the show itself blew in. But the modern store, the department store, begins at us almost before daylight every morning and never lets up till the next morning. It puts its offerings before us in the daily paper which we read at breakfast; it displays its wares before us as we walk down the street; it talks to us in the "extras" of the afternoons; and it lights its windows for our seduction as we leave the theater of an evening.

Regardless of season, weather, or circumstances, the department store is always before us. If the sun looks down with too favoring rays, the store manages to confront us with the idea that we can see a cooler place behind its windows. If winter grips us in its annual shudders, the store gently reminds us that furs and radiators and soft, thick blankets and alluring fireplaces can be found just beyond the revolving doors of Jones & Co. If there

has been a wreck or a fire that would have kept the circus away



Sales that play upon our fancy

for a week or have ruined any other institution, the store is on time next morning with a display of "damaged goods" at unheard-of prices. There even is on record a store which, having been robbed of all its fancy silks on Saturday night, made a special window display of plain silks on Monday morning, with a sign attached saying that it at least had these goods left and would sell them at a sacrifice!

There is on the modern store-keeper's mind not so much the supplying of our needs as the creating of needs that we never even dreamed of before. From cellar to garret of his huge establishment, he is at us hammer and tongs, and perennially along this one line. He holds exhibits,

offers bargains, advertises "white sales," "clearance sales," and any number of other kinds of sales to bring us under his roof where he can play upon our fancy and sell things to us that we previously knew not of. If we are reluctant, he cuts a gash in his prices that fetches the flush of curiosity to our cheeks. If we do not yield to prices and need education along other lines, he builds a suite of rooms, equipped like those of a mansion and invites us in, without charge, to see how the rich live and how we ought to live. If we are plain, plodding women who do our own housework, he piles his labor-saving devices in the windows until, contemplating them, we turn pale with envy and longing. If we have habits and refuse to be budged, he

springs a sanitary object-lesson on us and terrorizes us with the dread of disease if we do not speedily mend our ways.

Figuratively speaking, the department storekeeper stands in front of our Desires and Tastes like a policeman in front of the pushcart pedlar or the street crowd, and exclaims:

"Move along, please! Keep moving!"

**A**ND behind the storekeeper is a bunch of machinery calculated to keep almost anything moving. There is a store building, for instance, that costs anywhere from one hundred thousand to a million dollars and that has to earn the interest on its investment. There are anywhere from five to fifteen acres of floor space, chock full of stuff that has to be sold. There are a thousand to five thousand clerks that have to be paid. There are ten to a hundred horses that have to be fed or auto trucks that have to be garaged. There are factories that do nothing but make goods for the individual store, and the factories and their hands have to be sustained.

More than that, there are buyers scouring the country and crossing the ocean and invading the wildernesses to find things that will sell. There are wholesalers working hand in hand with jobbers, and jobbers massing their forces to prevail upon the retailer. There are designers utilizing their ingenuity and artists exerting their genius. There even are men who plan floor spaces and make a specialty of arranging shelves. There are women who give demonstrations and models who pose.

Manifestly, so vast a concern, instituted for private profit, has no alternative but to stand like the policeman in front of our Desires and Tastes and to keep them moving. It has been estimated, for

example, by the proprietor of one big department store that to sustain a store employing 2,000 clerks, a daily patronage of 20,000 to 25,000 persons is indispensable; and that means in the course of a week at least 100,000 to 150,000 persons. One hundred to one hundred and fifty thousand persons of

different frames of mind, of different impulses, of different tastes, and all to be led to one store and made to buy! Is it any wonder that the game of enticing makes the old-time circus look like a three-quarter lunar eclipse? A circus comes but once or twice a year, draws 10,000 to 12,000 visitors for two or three evenings successively and then departs; but a great modern store has to have twice that many every day in the year, and it never departs. Not only that, but differing further from the circus, it has to have a new excitement for every day in the calendar. The same show can not be offered twice in succession.

A problem, isn't it, for ingenuity, for cunning, for resourcefulness, for power? A problem that requires ability to get goods which will sell, ability to sell them at a figure that the public purse can stand, and ability to convince the public that the purse ought to stand it. A problem that would stagger the shades of the

storekeepers of old and addle the wits of most of the living ones, were they plunged into the midst of it unprepared by the course of evolution.

And what is the solution? Easy and simple, as usual. Just a knowledge of human nature, particularly American nature, and an adequate mercantile system to back it up. Just a recollection that most of us, being descendants of good old New England stock, or having been influenced by New England, love nothing in the world so much as a bargain, and that that store is our store

which gives us the most perpetual, undying, and matchless array of bargains. We may not all be of the same bargain mold. Some of us may be more suspicious than others of the things offered below price; but in one manner or other we all eventually rise to the idea of getting something for less than it appears to be worth. And day after day, the department store harps upon this one string.

Often, the things it presents appear almost unquestionably to be some manner of fraud; but it is seldom that they are. A two-dollar to three-dollar white shoe offered for ninety-eight cents looks impossible. Years ago, especially in the days of the old-time store, most of us would have shied.

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As we leave the theater of an evening



The clerk sees it before he does