

**A COMMERCIAL  
TRAVELLER'S  
REMINISCENCES**

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A commercial traveller's reminiscences by R. Symons

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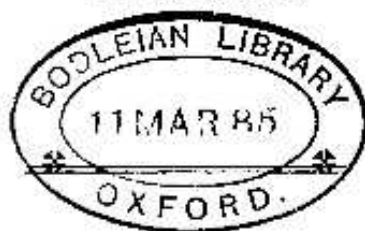
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COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER'S  
REMINISCENCES:

BY

R. SYMONS.



LONDON:

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1884.

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## P R E F A C E.



"FOOLS rush in where Angels fear to tread," is one of those time-worn axioms which are being daily exemplified, as may readily be seen by anyone who watches the shadows cast by the "fierce light" that the Press brings to bear upon the habits and homes of the humblest subject as well as upon the movements and actions of the August Ruler of our vast Empire—God bless and preserve Her Majesty for many a long year to come!—and it was not without a certain amount of trepidation, lest I should be classed in the former category, that I allowed myself to be persuaded to o'erstep the bounds of my "nomadic" vocation, and seek publicity beyond the sphere of my own circle. Having been from childhood imbued with a reverential respect for the Fourth Estate and our Literati as a body, I have looked upon their domain as almost sacred ground, and in venturing to tread—hesitatingly and awkwardly I know—the "ethereal space" surrounding it, I am doing so only at the urgent wish and desire of many of my associates, customers, and other—who I may call "outside"

—friends, whose esteem I regard as well worth striving for, and with the sole purpose of endeavouring to create a more widespread interest in, and directly benefiting, the Benevolent Institutions\* which are connected with the honourable "fellowship," of whom I am proud to be a member. I was cheered and encouraged to make the effort in a way that I shall never forget—I was told that many incidents must have occurred to me or have come within my cognizance which were worthy of taking a place in current literature as

"Abstracts and brief chronicles of the time."

And when I pleaded my imperfections and inability, my attention was drawn to the idea which Longfellow has so beautifully expressed in "The Building of the Ship":—

"Ah ! how skilful grows the hand  
That obeyeth Love's command !  
It is the heart, and not the brain,  
That to the highest doth attain."

Another thought, too, was suggested. My "reminiscences" as a Commercial Traveller extend now over a quarter of a century, and how better could the "SILVER WEDDING" of myself to my profession be celebrated than in this way? The "marriage" has been a happy, if not a fruitful, one—for "long stockings" laden with "golden grain" are the exception "on the road"—and I felt if I could afford but a modicum of pleasure by any "scribblings" of mine and at the same time aid, however slightly, the funds of the Institutions to which allusion has

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\* See page 6.



been made it would be a departure in my existence that I should ever have reason to revert to with pardonable pride, unalloyed with any sordid motive or personal gratification.

The Sketches that are here drafted out have been compiled in a rather hap-hazard manner, at brief intervals of leisure, and are offered simply as "samples"—good, bad, and indifferent, it may be—from a stock, which, were time and ability forthcoming, could supply material for a far more pretentious tome than now

"Sails forth into the sea of life."

One more quotation, which speaks for itself, and I have done :—

"If perhaps these 'lines' of mine should sound not well in strangers' ears,  
They have only to bethink them that it happens so with theirs ;  
For so long as words, like mortals, call a fatherland their own,  
They will be most highly valued where they are best and longest known."

R. SYMONS.

SOUTH GROVE,

PECKHAM, S.E.,

*November, 1884.*



## "OUR" BENEVOLENT INSTITUTIONS.



I SAY "institutions," because, although I am going to give a few figures respecting the one known as "The Commercial Travellers' Benevolent Institution," I would also especially commend, as equally deserving, the Schools, which have grown to large dimensions, and are now accommodating between 300 and 400 orphans. God prosper such handiwork, say I, with all sincerity.

Mr. Thomas Binstead—whose name ought to be engraved in "letters of gold" on every Traveller's heart—holds the high position of Chairman of the Board of Management of the C.T.B.I., and the great success which has attended the institution is mainly due to his noble and self-denying labours. The subjoined statistics indicate the marvellous progress made during the last twenty-years:—

	1861.	1883.
Invested Capital ... ..	£3,500	£27,514
Dividends ... ..	92	1,110
Donations and Subscriptions ...	911	7,000
Annuitants ... ..	600	6,320
Benevolent Day Contributions ...	153	1,115

The present "Suspense Fund," from which immediate relief is granted to deserving cases pending final election, amounts to £3,400.

The foregoing statement, while satisfactory and gratifying, is still not nearly all that can and ought to be done for such a cause. Let each one ask himself "Have I followed out fully the Divine injunction,

'Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you'?" and let our motto henceforth be "Excelsior!"

While I am upon this topic, the names of two travellers come naturally to my "pen's point"—Mr. Dryden and Mr. Mannering Bolton. The former is a lineal descendant of the celebrated poet of that name, and possessing many of the qualities of his famous ancestor—he is also a facile sketcher. These gentlemen have been the life and soul of amateur dramatic performances which have been organised for the benefit of the institutions, and in a variety of ways they have forwarded the good work.

Let me add a concluding line or two with respect to the C. T. Schools at Pinner (Mr Henry Lendon, secretary): In the Circular Letter relating to "Orphans' Day, October 29th, 1884," addressed to the "Chairman of the Day," at every Commercial Hotel throughout the country, I find it stated that although the expense of maintaining the large number of children in the Schools has been partly met by the very liberal response which has hitherto been made to the Simultaneous Appeal on "Orphans' Day," there has been a serious diminution in the number of Annual Subscribers. The Board say: "To maintain, and if possible to increase the existing number of inmates, and to carry on the work of the Schools with vigour and efficiency, a large increase in this source of income is absolutely necessary," and they, therefore, "venture to hope that all friends of the Institution will exert their influence, and each try to add at least *one new member to the list of Annual Subscribers.*" VERB. SAP.!

