

Wonderful Growth of a Great Business

Toronto Men Have Revolutionized the Tailoring Trade of Canada

With Headquarters in Montreal the Semi-ready Company is Controlled and Operated by Former Torontonians—Their Clean-Cut Business Methods Make a Huge Success.

SEMI-READY TAILORING was a unique conception. The basis of the idea was to apply to the tailoring business the same methods of manufacturing high-class clothes as had revolutionized the shoemaking trade in the decade before the introduction of Semi-ready tailoring. For some years the business had its ups and downs. The natural-born genius usually lacks business methods. The Semi-ready business had to pass into the control of men of larger constructive ability before it achieved success. The cheerful optimism of impractical men was succeeded by the masters of industrial system.

No single business in Canada has made a deeper impress upon its particular trade than has the Semi-ready system in its ten years of rapid progress. In Western Canada, where men are less conservative than in the east, the opening of a Semi-ready store in any town means that there is no room for a retail custom tailor to establish a successful business in that town.

The reformation of the tailoring trade, the conversion of the hit-or-miss tailoring into an economic wholesale organization for quicker and better service; the overcoming of the prejudice engendered by cheap ready-made clothing; these were not the achievement of a day or a single year. Even to-day one meets an individual who boasts that he still has his boots and his clothes made to order at the cobbler's and the tailor's shop. "Boasts of it! Just as years ago there were men who boasted that they never rode in a railway carriage. And everyone knows the man who takes pride in the fact that he never rode in an automobile; tells about it, too, and falls to interpret the smile that greets him.

"Better than the tailor's best" is one of the terse statements of the wholesale Semi-ready man.

With the first conception of the Semi-ready idea stores were opened in Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg. Not a single retail business man could invest a dollar in the idea, and the first stores were owned and operated by the founders of the new system. They were successful from the start. Men like good service. They are not patient waiters. They flocked to the new stores to see and to judge. Naturally the first buyers encountered some imperfections, for it takes years to perfect even the most perfect idea. Workmen had to be trained to produce the garments as they are now tailored, and salesmen had to be trained to know that they must not allow a suit or coat to be taken from the store unless it was a perfect garment in every respect and fitted the buyer as tho it were made for him.

Year by year the business expanded. In 1901 there were 15 Semi-ready stores in Canada.

In 1909 there were over 215 Semi-ready stores and agencies in Canada. From a small factory, employing 50 hands, the business now requires a factory with 450 workmen and an output close on to \$1,000,000 a year.

Four years ago there was a complete reorganization of the business and factory system.

Charles H. Nelson, for many years the resident partner in Toronto of H. A. Nelson & Sons, wholesalers and manufacturers, together with Alfred Wood, a former Toronto journalist, secured control of the business early in 1906. They at once inaugurated a new factory system and manned the organization to meet its larger and broader possibilities. Costs were reduced by careful methods in the factory, and values were bettered by more direct buying from the British woolen mills.

An English office was opened, and a resident director was placed in Bradford, in the heart of the great Yorkshire woolen district.

C. P. Creamer, the present managing director, and a thorough master of commercial system, was interested in the company, and brought his talents to help in the extension of the trade in Canada.

H. A. Nelson joined the organization as secretary-treasurer. He had been for some years in charge of a manufacturing business in Montreal.

The present officers and board of directors of The Semi-ready, Limited, are:

C. H. Nelson—President.
Alfred Wood—Vice-president.
C. P. Creamer—Managing Director.
H. A. Nelson—Sec.-Treasurer.
J. H. Brownlee—Director.
C. E. Nelson—Director.
E. L. Nelson—Director.

Donald Logan, who joined the Semi-ready the first year of its launching in Canada, and who was previously a clever journeyman tailor, is the superintendent of the factory.

On the traveling staff are: Messrs. C. F. Nelson, J. A. Lachance, R. Allan Herring, O. M. Thomson.

E. Leeds Nelson has charge of the British offices of the company. These are on Peel-place, Bradford, Eng., facing the monument erected to the memory of Sir Robert Peel.

RILEY HERN'S GREAT SUCCESS

From Clerkship to Ownership of First Semi-Ready Store in Canada.

In Montreal there is a young business man who is a standing proof of the fact that the golden opportunities of to-day are as numerous and as certain as at any time in the history of Canada. The young man who is in training to take full advantage of his chance when it comes will succeed some day. To some the opportunity comes more quickly than to others, and there is always a medium of luck in life. But energy, ability and pluck must win always.

Four years ago Riley Hern arrived in Montreal with a hockey stick, fifteen Canadian dollars, and a working knowledge of the high-class clothing trade; the latter gained after he left Stratford, and whilst he was working in several cities in the United States. He played hockey for three months each winter and bestowed his services in the best clothing shops in the off months.

His first application for work in Montreal was at the Semi-ready store on St. Catherine-street. For two years or so he clerked in the store. Then he wanted a store of his own and for a time debated whether he should go back to Stratford or open up in a small way in Montreal. He had saved his "hockey money"—and some. Stratford was calling him because it was "home" and because there was a splendid opening for a Semi-ready store there. The people wanted one, and Riley was assured of a big trade. For a short time Stratford had a Semi-ready store, but its owner was lured away by the larger profits in selling ready-made.

A young lady living in a town not far from Montreal had a big share in Mr. Hern's decision, and Montreal looked bigger than Stratford—after the regular Christmas trip home. A neat and dainty little store was opened on a quiet business street in Montreal, and Riley Hern at once started to make new records in business. He turned over his stock fourteen times in a year. His profits for the first year were four times his original capital. Every month's business showed an increase over the previous month. Yet there were three other Semi-ready stores in Montreal.

Riley Hern took stock—and he got married. His first year's business showed profits equal to five years' salary. There is a Riley, Junior, now. During his second year in business he bought out the store in Montreal where he had started as a clerk not four years before. He secured the largest Semi-ready tailoring business in Canada last July. And already he is making new records.

In one month Riley Hern increased the trade in his new store by \$2200 over what his predecessors had done. He is doing a business which will mean that his stock in trade will be turned over ten times in the year. He is in a fair way to make a fortune.

Mr. Hern embraced the new business methods with enthusiasm. He is content to make little profits to compel the larger turnover.

The Semi-ready factory has an immense output, but it is said that the average profit on each suit is about 60 cents.

SEMI-READY CLOTHES HAVE THE DESIGN

They Are Noted For Their Artistic Contour and Cultured Expression.

One of the outstanding merits of Semi-ready clothes is the distinctive designs, evidencing the work of an artistic mind in the artistic design and cultured expression of the garment.

No retail tailor in Canada could afford to retain the services of the designers who are working and studying all the year round in the Semi-ready designing department. It is only where an immense trade is carried on that men of commanding ability can be secured and held. The value of the patterns and designs in the Semi-ready factory is believed to be greater than the total turnover in any one of 75 per cent. of the tailor shops in Canada.

The chief designer travels to all the fashion centres of the world, visiting London, New York and Chicago. From his observations there he gathers ideas and produces models which are a composite of the best and most suitable styles for Canada. He creates original designs, which are in turn copied by the bright men with whom he comes in contact. There is always a free interchange of ideas and experiences between men at the head of their professions.

Thus, the Semi-ready designers not alone make the styles for Canada, but they have an influence on men's fashions the world over.

QUICK SALES SMALL STOCKS

Where Every Item of Expense Must Be Studied For Successful Business.

In a large city in Western Canada there was a merchant who was a prince of merchants—a man of indomitable energy and compelling vigor. That he was far-sighted was proven by his taking over the Semi-ready agency as soon as he studied the features of the tailoring way of to-day. His death was regretted by a host of admirers and friends, as he was not alone a prosperous merchant, but he was almost a pioneer merchant in the city.

His fortune was \$400,000. His sons succeeded to the business. There were two stores, both well established, and in operation for years. The largest store was on the main business thoroughfare, and the Semi-ready store was on a quieter street some blocks away.

It was found that in the larger store there was a stock of \$100,000, and the average annual turnover in this store had been \$100,000. The yearly sales were thus equal to the stock carried. The city is far removed from the source of supply.

In the Semi-ready store there was a stock of \$25,000, and the annual turnover was \$75,000. The sales were three times as large as the stock carried. And the chief clerk reported that the Semi-ready stock was all fresh and new, and worth 100 cents on the dollar.

The larger net-profit and the safer business was with the Semi-ready store, from a purely investment point

of view. Of course, the other store showed a larger percentage of profit, for the goods were not price-marked by the makers.

In Montreal there are two large Semi-ready stores. On St. Catherine-street one month's business was about equal to the average amount of stock carried at the stock-taking period. On St. James-street the percentage is not quite as large.

How can the dealer sell all the goods in his store and yet have goods to show? The Semi-ready have a system of continuous delivery of stock. Their output, instead of being delivered in glutting fashion, is steadily forwarded to meet the store requirements with each changing season.

The factory sales do not vary greatly, as in the old-time clothing factory. The fall suits go out to the stores just when they are needed. The fall overcoats are delivered and then the dress suits and evening clothes. Afterwards the winter overcoats.

Then each store has its cloth samples, and month in and month out several thousand suits, overcoats and special garments are being tailored from measurements sent in from the 200 stores in Canada. The customer selects what he wants from any one of 350 imported fabrics, more patterns than are shown in the biggest retail tailor shops. The garment is made in four days at the factory, on an absolute time schedule.

This helps the merchant to keep his stock low. He runs no risks. He suffers no loss. Where he is in doubt about a style or pattern, he can wait and see, and still not lose business; for he has the sample and the hurry-up delivery promise. The losses from mistakes in buying are the biggest losses—and somebody must pay. The customer pays—just as he pays the losses of the credit store, and just as he pays the highest price where prices are marked with pen or pencil. Semi-ready clothes are never marked up 50 per cent., that they can be "marked down" or re-tagged.

CLEAN METHODS APPEAL TO BUYERS

Price-Marked Clothes and the Same Prices Prevail All Over Canada.

In calling on the merchants of Canada the one chief objection to Semi-ready is the virtue which is the strongest appeal to the reason of the buyer.

The retail selling price of a Semi-ready suit or overcoat is fixed by the maker. That price is inflexible and invariable. It is the same price in Toronto as in Montreal, and the same price in Winnipeg, Vancouver and Victoria as it is in every Semi-ready store in Canada.

Dealers object to the affixing of the price on the garment, as this naturally fixes their profit, and they say that the profit is only half what

they make on the ready-made clothing they sell. The lesser profit is admitted, but the growth of the Semi-ready business would be handicapped if the same big profits were put on as prevail in the ready-made trade.

The plain price is the modern way of building a flourishing business. Staple goods can always be sold at a closer margin above cost. There is no risk or loss in selling fine clothes that are guaranteed by the makers. The Semi-ready system is founded on clean, straight methods that appeal to buyers. In the long run, the consumer is the man who makes or mars a business, and the cleverest trader cannot long withstand the demand for that which is of good report.

The lowest-priced Semi-ready suit sells at \$15. Below this price the company will not make up clothes, for they will not put the Semi-ready name upon cheap or tawdry cloth.

Suits and overcoats are also sold at \$18 and \$20, and these represent a higher cost of cloth and linings. But the style and workmanship, the inside tailoring is just as good in the \$15 line as in any of the higher-priced lines.

At \$22 the Blunoz serge, in both black and navy blue, represents a fine quality of Canadian woollens, and this is practically the only Canadian woollen product used in the making of Semi-ready suits.

When one reaches the \$25 and \$30 qualities in the Semi-ready stores one often hears the exclamation, "Why, that is the price I pay my tailor!" But the quality in the higher-priced Semi-ready clothes is such as few but the very best tailor shops carry—the "swell" tailors show them at \$35 and \$40.

The swell tailor has to pay his journeyman coatmaker three times as much as it costs the Semi-ready shops to produce the same coat, and then he must grudgingly admit that the Semi-ready coat has a better

ONE STORE IN EACH CITY

A Monopoly For the Best Merchant in Each Town.

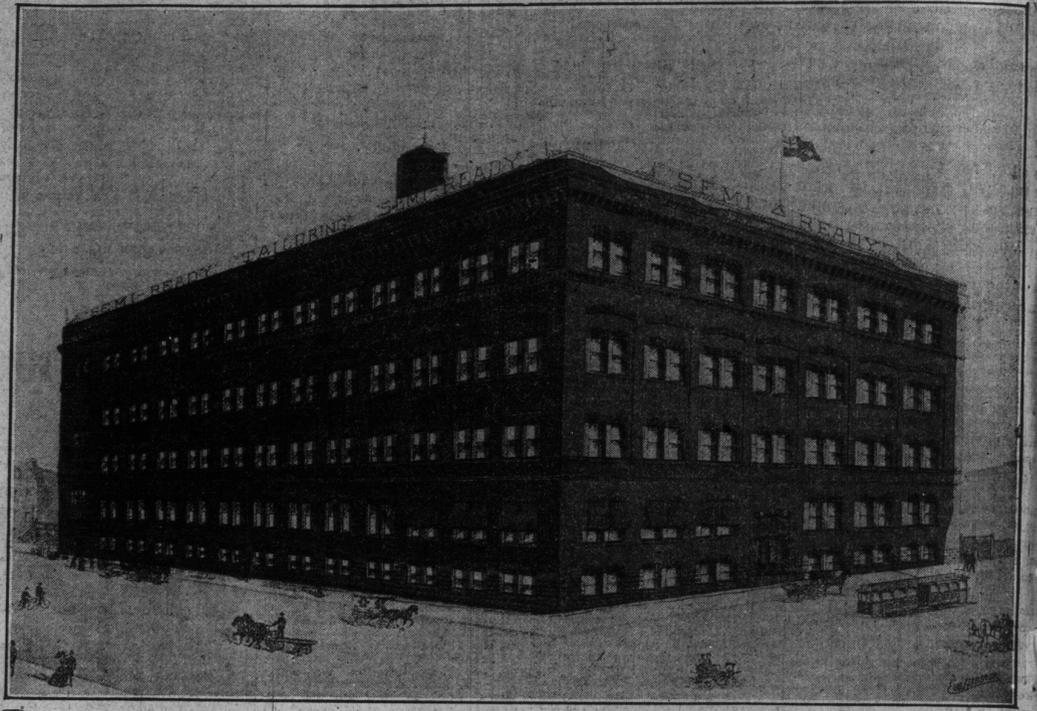
With one or two exceptions the Semi-ready Company have followed the plan of selling to but one store in each town or city.

In Toronto, Ed Mack secured the exclusive sale of Semi-ready tailoring. No other store in this big city can buy a single Semi-ready garment. As soon as Mr. Mack secured this valuable monopoly he organized a company, gave up his retail tailoring business, and doubled the size of his store at 81 Yonge-street.

L. Thomas is secretary-treasurer of Ed Mack, Limited, and Mr. L. Campbell is one of the directors.

The Toronto store carries a large and representative stock of Semi-ready tailoring, and they can also deliver in four days suits or overcoats made to special designs from selected patterns of imported cloths.

"Nearly 25 per cent. of our trade each year is from new customers—people who have never tried Semi-ready before," said Mr. Mack. "But the bulk of trade comes from our steady customers."



The Semi-ready factory in Montreal is devoted exclusively to their high-class tailoring system.

Full Dress Suits and Men's Formal Dress

Where the Semi-ready Tailoring Shows Its Class and Style

In the Making of Frock Coats, Dress Suits and Tuxedo Jackets They Stand Supreme—Clothes That Only a Few Clever Tailors Can Produce.

It would be safe to say that there are not in Toronto a dozen journeyman tailors to whom the master retail tailor would entrust the making of a frock coat for the Premier of Canada without some misgiving. Frock coats and dress suits are the bete noir of the average retail tailor, and nine times out of ten he will not thank you with any enthusiasm for the order. It's a gamble with him as to whether it will be a frock or a freak when his "jour" returns it for the trying time of the "try-on."

Yet the mention of a frock coat or a dress suit arouses the enthusiasm of the Semi-ready man. He knows that every garment is modeled correctly, and that the difficult contour of the dress garment has been mastered by expert tailors in the Semi-ready shops, by men who do nothing else the year round but make "clothes for events."

A dress suit or a frock coat is often required quickly for some unlooked-for social emergency. One may decide to go to a ball or a banquet, or a reception, at the last moment. The Semi-ready store saves any embarrassment.

Where in days gone by one had to pay \$40 to \$50 for a dress suit or a frock coat, a better-fitting Semi-ready garment can now be had on an hour's notice for \$25.

Tuxedo jackets have come into

universal favor of late years, and their social scope has been widened by consent because the garment is both neat and of good dress appearance. They have these in the Semi-ready stores in the latest English models. They are inexpensive, and of late years many ladies buy them at Christmas time as appropriate gifts for men.

The Tuxedo with the shawl collar, all silk, will always be a favorite evening house jacket, but the Semi-ready stores are also showing the long roll collar, in all silk, with peak lapels. In Mack's Semi-ready store they have hundreds of these garments in stock for quick delivery.

In Ottawa, where there is much social activity in the parliamentary season, they report sales of Semi-ready formal dress to the men whose names are household words in Canada.

The statement has been made that more Semi-ready dress suits are sold than are made by all the other tailors in Canada.

If one would judge the high standard of the Semi-ready product by their success with the most difficult problems of fine tailoring the verdict in favor of the modern system would be universally affirmative.

The making of these suits has had much to do in overcoming the prejudice of men who are naturally conservative and averse to trying anything new or anything they have not been in the habit of wearing.

Ed. Mack Says:

"I want every man to feel that he is welcome to come and visit the Semi-ready Store; to feel that he can come as a sight-seer and a student of fashion and fabric.

"We make it a point never to urge a man to buy, never to be insistent or cause embarrassment. Our staff prefer to be helpful and informative. Above all, we want to do the right thing, and to make every caller feel that in coming to the Toronto Semi-ready Store he has come to judge for himself.

"Even after you become our customer, we are not satisfied unless you are satisfied.

"In the most convincing way I mean it when I repeat, 'You need not buy because you come, nor keep because you buy.'

"Ours is a one-price store. You cannot buy for any less, nor will you pay any more than any other customer.

"As the former conductor of the old-time tailor-shop, I can say in all sincerity that the Semi-ready system of tailoring must prevail, and that ultimately the men's clothing business of the future will be conducted in 'the Semi-ready way of to-day.'"