

MONTREAL'S RETAIL TRADE.

THE dry goods trade of Montreal have had some peculiar experiences this fall in more ways than one. For instance, THE REVIEW, after a careful canvass of the big general houses in that city, learned that the payments to date had been met far better than for the corresponding period last year. This would lead to the inference that the trade have had a satisfactory season, but, though they all agree in regard to the above particular, they still protest strongly that their fall experiences have been very unsatisfactory. This does not mean that the volume of fall trade has not been equal to that of last year, for it is generally admitted that it has; but that the heavy losses that Montreal houses have had to put up with in connection with their trade in Montreal city proper have wiped out completely a big portion of what should have stood on the profit side of the ledger. All through the summer and fall the backwardness of these city collections has been a notorious fact with the trade, and had it not been for the much better returns from the country, the statement at the opening of this article could not have been made. In fact, as THE REVIEW pointed out some time ago, the wholesale trade in Montreal can never remember a year when their city trade was as bad as it is at present. To make matters worse, the end of August and the month of September saw a regular rain of failures in the city retail dry goods trade, the effects of which will be felt for some time. Firm after firm kept throwing up the sponge, until one cannot count them on the fingers of both hands, or on five hands, for that matter. This, as everyone knows, meant not only the loss that the wholesale men had to put up with, but that these goods, after being bought in, were sold at such greatly reduced rates that other firms could not stand the pressure, and had to ask for composition also. A case in point that came under notice recently will illustrate this plainly. A retail merchant, who not over a month ago showed a surplus of over \$8,000, approached his principal creditor, a well-known St. Paul street firm, and stated that he could not stand the pace any longer. Three of his competitors, not half a mile from him on the same street, had got a composition, and now they were selling at such low figures that his store was empty all the time. This is only one case of several, which shows plainly that the bulk of the Montreal retailers are not in a healthy position. The secret of the whole trouble is that the retail dry goods trade is altogether too much cut up. There are too many stores, for the reason that many wholesalers,

not only in Montreal but in Toronto, seem willing to carry almost any one along now-a-days, and retail traders who are doing business on a more conscientious basis have the handicap of this competition. When the pinch comes, as it did this summer, the results are, as they have been, disastrous. It is just possible, in this connection, that the pinch this was accentuated in the city by the many men out of work.

THE SMALL CITY RETAILER.

It will be apropos of the present discussion of retailing in its new phases to mention one class of city retailer who is unaffected by the growth of the departmental store. This is the class of retailer who lives in the suburbs of such cities as Toronto, in a house with a small store in front, and who is assisted in his business by his family. This man carries, generally, a stock of about \$3,000 worth of goods, which are usually paid for. He buys in small quantities from hand to mouth, and at regular wholesale prices. He takes advantage of cash discounts, the same as the largest retailer. After buying right he sells at a good advance. His rent is merely nominal, being not much more than for an ordinary dwelling. His cost of management and his bill for wages are exceedingly small. In fact, his percentage of selling cost is no larger than that of the largest store.

This kind of dealer continues to flourish, and does not show the slightest signs of losing his hold on the trade. His store being situated a mile and a half or two miles from the centre of the city where the large stores congregate, he does not feel the opposition of the latter.

GIVING UP JOBBING.

The Worsted Weaving Co., of Bradford, England, have a Canadian warehouse at 54 Bay street. At first only samples were carried, but about a year ago a stock was brought out and supplies made from Toronto instead of from Bradford.

This feature, as will be seen by their advertisement on page 32, is to be abandoned, and the agency in Toronto will simply be for taking orders for import. Their goods are undoubtedly worthy of attention, but it seems that those who can handle large quantities of these lines prefer to buy early and have goods shipped direct, as in ordinary importing.

