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THE DRY GOODS REVIEW

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PROTECTION AND COLLECTION.



WE have since our last issue received several letters asking for further information in regard to the suit of Green vs. Minnes & Burns, dry goods merchants, Kingston, in which a decision was given by Mr. Justice Rose upholding the legality of advertising an account for sale to

the highest bidder. There is not much to add to what we said last month. The plaintiff, Green, had been given every chance to liquidate the debt, but stubbornly refused to come to time. The defendants accordingly placed the account in the hands of the collecting agency, whose requests were treated in a similar manner, and then the final step of advertising the account for sale was resorted to. From enquiries we have made we find that the retail merchants of Kingston have good reason to congratulate themselves upon the methods they employ for their protection against dead-beats and for the collection of long-outstanding accounts.

So far as protection is concerned the system appears to be perfect. Each member sends in a list to the agency giving the name and address of the debtor, the amount of the account, and the date when last rendered. The agency in turn issues a weekly list containing all the names in alphabetical order and the amounts, etc., supplemented by any remarks of amounts paid in part or in full of accounts on previous lists. A complete record is therefore in possession of each member. If a new customer should visit a store and ask to be credited for goods ordered, all the merchant has to do is to step into his office, turn up his list, and in a minute he can run his eye over the names and is at once in a position to refuse or give the credit asked without having to enter into any explanation. We are

informed that the effect has been most beneficial to the store-keepers, as it naturally would, and there seems to be no likelihood of the system being allowed to languish and die for lack of support, as it did in Ottawa. In the latter place the civil service element is too powerful to admit of any concerted action being successfully adopted to get payment of accounts within reasonable time, or even at any time. In other cities and towns we cordially recommend the adoption of the Kingston system. We understand it has been patented by the agency, but we presume they would be only too glad to offer their services wherever and whenever required. It has the merit of simplicity and effectiveness.

In regard to the collection of accounts what is done is about as follows: After the patience of the merchant has been exhausted he sends the debtor a final notice that unless the account is paid forthwith his name will be put on the list in possession of the collecting agency. This being ineffective the account is handed to the agency. To give the debtor every opportunity of saving his good name the agency sends him first one notice, then another, and a final, which contains a proof of the poster announcing his account for sale. Even then immediate action is not taken but so many days' grace is allowed. Then the poster is printed, but if the debtor should give in, even at the twelfth hour, the type would be taken out and a blank left where his name formerly stood. This has been done on more than one occasion. There is no compulsion, only a perfectly legitimate weapon—publicity—is used to make people pay their just and lawful debts.

We have before us a yellow poster announcing "Accounts for sale by the Canadian Commercial Agency, on Friday, 18th December, 1891, at Martin's auction rooms, Brock street, Kingston, at 8 p.m." Eighteen names and addresses are on the poster, and opposite them are amounts ranging from \$1.40 to \$37.72 for dry goods, drugs, hardware, etc., dry goods being in the majority. Looking at the poster one cannot help thinking that a man must be devoid of all sense of shame to put himself in the position of having it publicly notified to all and sundry that he is a "dead beat," as it is well-known that only the names of those who are able, but unwilling, to pay, are put on the posters. Again we say to merchants in other localities, "Go thou and do likewise," and we feel assured a rich harvest of payments of long outstanding accounts will be realized. The cost is trifling compared with the benefits derived.

We have given this subject particular attention, as we firmly believe the system would, if generally adopted, be the salvation of hundreds of retailers who, from the nature of their environment, are compelled to do a credit business. Where there is no organization a "dead-beat" can make his rounds of the various stores in a town and get all the credit he wants. It is a fact, and one that is to be deeply deplored, that the jealous feeling existing among retailers enables these sharks to bleed them freely. It is high time the dry goods men sank all such petty jealousy and organized for their mutual benefit and protection on similar, if not broader, lines than those in Kingston, in view of the organization of the Patrons of Industry and the existing condition of trade.