

CANADIAN BANKING PRACTICE.

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XXIII.

They do not, except in unusual cases, suffer any deduction from their income; they receive the full amount of their salaries. With the teller's mistakes it is not so. There is a much greater chance of them costing him money. He works as hard as the others and as carefully, and naturally feels that he should, like them, have the full benefit of the salary that is allowed him. This he does not get when he is called on from time to time to make up petty shortages.

When he knows that the extra risk belonging to his post is covered by a special allowance, he feels more secure in the enjoyment of his salary, the sense of injustice is entirely eradicated, and it should tend to make him a more valuable servant.

Before entering upon his duties the new teller must take over the cash. As soon as his predecessor has balanced for the day on which the transfer is to take place, he enters the teller's box, and counts the money which makes up the balance of the teller's cash. The officer about to vacate the position is responsible until the whole is formally counted and taken over. It is his duty, therefore, to be present in the box and to personally oversee the whole operation.

The full particulars of the teller's cash are entered every day in the teller's balance book. All the different kinds of money are entered in the proper order.

A page of the balance book is given to each banking day. At the top will be the specifications of the bank's own notes. The denominations are printed in, with a blank space in front for the number of each. The cash is all arranged in bundles, 100 notes to a bundle, usually fifty notes facing outwards on each side.

So, beginning with the bank's own notes, the new teller counts them and as he does so, ticks off the specification in the balance book. The broken parts of bundles will be in wooden slats held together by rubber bands. The cash counted and ticked off must be kept apart, in his sole possession. He is responsible for that. So he goes through each subdivision of cash; the bank's own notes, the Dominion notes, or legal tender, the specie, the notes of other banks in Canada, the United States currency.

When the cash is counted there will be, if other banks are in town, a list of cheques on them which are to be cleared next banking day. These are to be ticked off and the total taken in with the others. Now-a-days the silver is to a large extent kept in coin-packages constructed so as to give a clear view of what is inside. But these may be quite a considerable lot, perhaps several hundred dollars, rolled up in paper cartridges of convenient sizes for paying out over the counter. He will have some doubts as to whether he should accept these as containing the amounts marked on the outside, or whether he should break them all open, count them and roll them up again and make sure that the correct amount is contained.

In deciding this question the particular circumstances of the case should help. If the former teller is leaving the bank no chances should be taken; if he is promoted to a higher position in the same branch the rolled up silver could be accepted subject to count which could be done at leisure. But the incoming teller is responsible for every dollar of cash he signs for, and he should therefore on general principles make sure of everything. On finishing the count, the extensions are checked and all the items composing the balance examined carefully to make sure that all are ticked off.

When the additions are checked the balance shown by the book is to be compared with the cash-book balance, and if it agrees the new teller initials or signs the balance book accepting the responsibility for the balance there shown, and releasing his predecessor, the teller's keys are turned over to the new-comer, the cash is locked up in

the safe, and everything is ready for the taking up of the new duties on the morning of the next banking day.

As soon as he has access, the next day, to his compartment in the safe, the teller brings out his tin box containing the cash he needs to use; takes it into the teller's cage and locks the door. With regard to these cages, the approved practice is to have them give complete cover from all sides and from above. The roof, and the sides above the wood-work are built of stout wire. In the front railing a small wicket is placed, through which the teller transacts business with the public. Another wicket at the side for passing vouchers, etc., to the deposit ledger keeper, and the door for ingress and egress constitute the means of communication with outside. The door to the cage is provided with a spring lock which can be opened from the inside by turning a knob, but requiring a key to be opened from the outside. The rules are strict on the point of complete isolation. The teller must not part with the key to his cage door, nor must he allow any one, even of his fellow-officers, into his cage while the cash is there.

Formerly the teller's cages had walls but no roof. Ingenious thieves took advantage of this to provide themselves with long canes or sticks, with a contrivance at the end for taking hold of such things as bundles of cash, and watching their opportunity were able on several occasions to reach over the front railings and get away with parcels of money snatched up in this manner from the counter. The roof over the top was the answer given by the banks to these attacks.

After the roof was added it proved valuable also as a defence against a different kind of attack. The officers of a small country branch outside the teller's cage were overpowered one day several years ago during the noon-hour by a couple of desperate villains, one officer being killed by them. The teller, however, was in one of the new style of cages. He kept his door closed and refused to open it or hand over his cash though threatened with revolvers. The hold-up men feared to fire their guns, but they made desperate efforts to break into the cage—one of them getting up on top and tearing and pounding as hard as he could. Thanks to the stoutness of the wire and the lock, and to the opposition of the teller, they were unable to effect an entrance, and their lookout announcing that several customers were approaching they took themselves off without getting the plunder.

The reason the other clerks are not allowed in the cage is because the teller alone is responsible for the cash in his charge. If he is short at the end of the day and has religiously obeyed the rules he can be quite sure in his mind that none of his fellows have stolen from him or let him in for loss through errors made by them in transacting business on his behalf.

If the door is sometimes locked and sometimes open, the teller constantly running out of his cage, other officers going in there in his absence paying cheques or receiving deposits for him, the difficulty of tracing a shortage is multiplied because there are so many the more of possible ways in which it might have occurred.

The best tellers are extremely strict on this point. While their cash is out of the safe they hardly ever let it, or their cage, out of their sight. They aim to be able to say at the close of every day, "It was not possible for any one, in the bank or out of it, to have taken a single dollar from my cash without my knowledge between the time it was brought from the safe in the morning and the time it was put back there in the evening."

On getting the cash out the first thing done is to arrange it in order convenient for handling through the day. The cash drawer will have a row of compartments for the till money. A compartment each will be provided for the ones, twos, fours and fives, tens, twenties; a block of wood with several bowl-shaped hollows is there for the coins. Only the broken parts of bundles are put in the drawer; the bundles themselves are stored in convenient order in the tin box, which is kept on the floor or on a low shelf or table immediately to hand.