

THE TRADER.

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The Repeal of the Insolvent Act.

The indications are, that unless again vetoed by the Senate, the present session of the Dominion Parliament will see the last of the Insolvent Act. Bad as "the Act of 1875 and amending Acts" is, it is better than none, and that the country will discover to its cost when once the mischief occasioned by its repeal has commenced. The almost unanimous opinion of the merchants in Canada is, that such an Act is a necessity, and that in view of the present commercial situation, it would be disastrous for us to go back to the position we occupied before the enactment. That the present government think such an "Act" a necessity is quite evident from the fact that last year they prepared and brought before the House an Insolvent Act of their own. If their united wisdom had considered the country was better off without such a measure they would scarcely have gone to the trouble of preparing it.

It seems, however, that with true partisan instincts they have deliberately sacrificed their own judgment and the welfare of the country in the matter, in order to keep clear of trouble. There is not the slightest doubt but that if the Government had really been desirous of having their Act passed it would have been done. The large majority they have in the house has proved its subserviency by swallowing worse doses than any Insolvency Act could possibly be.

Although the Insolvent Act is sadly defective in its construction, the principle pervading it is a just one, viz., "That when a dealer becomes an insolvent his estate should be divided amongst his creditors, *pro rata*." Take away this principle and you at once open the way for roguery of every description.

Mr. Colby may imagine he is purchasing notoriety at a very low price, and the government may assume that it is none of their business whether the Act is abolished or not, but we very much mistake the feeling of the mercantile classes of the Dominion if it does not provoke a very strong feeling of antagonism against the Conservative party, who have the power, if they only had the will, to give the people what they desire in this matter. The Insolvency Act is one which only directly affects business men, and if they are willing and anxious to have it, believing it to be for the general good, we do not see why outsiders, whose rights are in no way affected by it, should feel called on to interfere in the matter. This act, which affects business men only, should be framed by business men to suit their own views, and if they do not know what they want, or what is best in a purely commercial matter such as this is we hardly think it possible for them to receive instruction from those who know less about it than they do themselves.

The Government ought to take the trouble to learn, either through the Boards of Trade, or by communicating with merchants, the general views upon the subject. When once they had these they could have but little difficulty in framing an act which would be acceptable alike to debtor and Creditor. The Toronto Board of Trade has presented the Government with a memorial setting forth the dangers which will be caused by the repeal of the present act; this has been signed by nearly all the leading merchants of this city, and ought to convince the Governor if such proof were necessary, that the mercantile community do not look upon this subject in the same light as do the members of the present Parliament.

It is to be hoped that if Mr. Colby's Bill passes its third reading in the Commons, the members of the Senate will have the courage to strangle it again. If they do they will deserve well of their country.

Commercial Travellers.

A quarter of a century ago "commercial travellers were a sort of *rara avis*, to-day they are one of the recognized institutions of the country, and the wheels of commerce would move very slowly without them. In those good old days their advent was looked forward to by the merchants with whom they did business as one of the *events* of the season; they were welcomed when they came, feasted

while they remained, and wished a prosperous journey when they took their leave. Ah! but those were the good old days. It was a hard life, for roads were almost impassable, the country sparsely settled, and hotel accommodation not of the very highest order, but in spite of these disadvantages it had its bright side, goods were hard to get and easy to sell, accounts, though few, were safe, and travellers and their customers were friends and not unfrequently boon companions in something else than business. To day the traveller occupies a very different position. He is no longer uncommon, indeed so numerous has the tribe become and so assiduously do they cultivate their customers that they have almost come to be considered a necessary nuisance. Their name is "legion," for they are many. They are no longer welcomed as jolly companions, and their coming and going has become so common as to be a matter of perfect indifference to the merchants with whom they transact business.

If, however, commercial travellers have lost their social status with their customers, they have vastly improved in other respects.

The traveller of to-day is a man of men, shrewd, quick-witted, a good judge of human nature, well up in business, educated, gentlemanly, and thoroughly master of himself; he is in every thing pertaining to business head and shoulders above his prototype of a quarter of a century ago.

And just in proportion as the class of men have improved, so have they influenced the direction of trade; they have great opportunities and grave responsibilities resting upon them, and as a rule they are fully equal to the requirements. The fact that they are so universally employed proves conclusively that they are an outgrowth of commercial necessity. There is not a wholesale house of any size that does not employ one or more travellers in order to benefit their trade. Indeed it may be pretty safely said that the bulk of the trade of Canada is in the hands of our commercial travellers, and merchants who want either to build up a new business or conserve an old one, are bound to employ them.

Several of our leading wholesale houses held out against them for years, and tried in their advertisements to make capital out of the fact that "they employed no travellers," but they have since realized that they were behind the spirit of the age and have fallen regularly into line, and are now trying to outdo their competitors by sending out the best equipped travellers in the country.