

Cutting by Western Houses.

Incontrovertible facts have recently borne out in every particular the charges we made against certain dry goods houses in Toronto and other western points, for the frightful manner in which they have undersold the legitimate trade, for the purpose of "raising the wind." Not only have Toronto houses been cutting prices on their own ground, but they have at last "bearded the lion in his den," by offering to sell goods in Montreal below what our local houses are selling. We are aware of an instance in which a line of gingham, originally costing 10c. here and shipped to a western firm, found its way back to this city, where it was recently disposed of at 5c., or at a loss of 50 per cent. upon cost. When goods are offered at such fearful "cuts" below cost, they are simply sold by weak firms in order to obtain ready funds that they may extend their lease of a rotten and bankrupt existence. The *Trade Bulletin* was the first to ventilate this ruinous cutting business amongst western houses, and before any of the late failures in Toronto, London, Dover, etc., had taken place, we predicted the trouble in unmistakably bold terms, and we still maintain that the end of it has not yet been seen.—*Montreal Trade Bulletin.*

Something About Furs.

The fur trade of Canada is a most important interest, whether we consider it from the point of view of the powerful and wealthy Hudson's Bay Company, the many merchants who trade in and cure peltries, or the vast number of individual trappers who depend altogether or to a considerable extent upon the capture of furbearing animals for their means of maintenance.

We have just received from W. Macnaughton's Coy's, New York Agents of the Honorable the Hudson's Bay Company, their circular for January which, as it contains a considerable amount of valuable information, we review at length. In the first place we are informed that the prospects point clearly to good business and it is therefore advisable to forward furs to market as early as possible, in order to profit by any favorable circumstances that may arise. Particular stress is laid upon the advisability of furs being assorted and graded before being sent to market, as not only does the presence of inferior skins among those of better quality, diminish the attractiveness of the latter, but renders them liable to be depreciated in value by the purchaser. Moreover to realize the best results, assorted furs should be graded down according to their sizes as well as to the quality of their fur. No. 1 for instance is described as a flesh colored pelt, or one that looks like fresh sound raw meat, has a long, heavy fur, abundant, thick and compact, which when blown in-to separates down to the pelt and looks even, fine and like silk. In a word this goes to make up what is termed prime fur. Furs that have imperfections, such as inferior color, or are old, neglected and in poor condition, have been improperly handled or are suspicious appearing are graded down one, two or three grades and put in that grade to which their condition makes them nearest in value.

As to the taking of furs, it should not be forgotten that, as the cold increases, their quality improves, and after three or four weeks of steady cold weather the quality of fur is at it,

best and then has the least top hair. When furs are improperly handled they will always bring a poor sale, while old furs of any kind are sure to be faded and, on being dressed, are without life or lustre, and frequently prove to have been more or less moth damaged. Mid-winter caught furs have the best color, as the sun is not warm enough or strong enough to fade them while alive and running; but as soon as the mild days of early spring sets in they begin to lose color and the fur begins to shed or fall out. The clearness, cleanness and lustre of a skin add materially to its value. Trappers, no matter upon what pretext, should avoid taking furs until the animals have had at least a fair chance of making growth, too early or too late furs being not only a disgrace to trappers and collectors, but, as we have frequently pointed out, a wasteful and worthless slaughter. One point to bear in mind is that fully grown fur costs no more to dress and manufacture than little ones, yet they cut to better advantage, yield double and hence are very much more valuable. Furs ought always to be trapped; shot cuts the pelt and shaves off the fur, while poisoning destroys and deadens the lustre and lessens the selling price which is a most important consideration. These observations which have been carefully collected ought, we think, to commend themselves, as we have need to exercise more common sense and economy, if not scientific knowledge in matters that concern this as well as many other industries. Reckless trapping and wastefulness in dealing with peltry cannot go on forever. We have had by far too much of it.

There was a time when there was far less discrimination than now with respect to the condition of the skins that were offered to the dealer. The prices which he was accustomed to pay were sufficiently low to enable him to take in almost anything that was offered and make at the same time enormous profits. The available supply has been materially depleted, prices have been enhanced, so that he cannot put up with what he once did. Moreover, almost everyone—and most people wears furs in a climate like that of Canada—use pelts, and each one professes to be something of a connoisseur and cannot have anything fobbed off on him. For all these reasons, reckless taking, reckless curing and reckless purchasing by storekeepers are to be reprehended. Poor furs will not pay, the ultimate consumer will not buy them or, if he does, is not inclined to pay much for them. All parties are therefore losers. The storekeeper when he sends or brings them to town is disappointed as to results, and the trapper, who frequently receives store pay, discovers that there is a far less margin to his account than he had anticipated. Thus no one is satisfied and our fur bearing animals are becoming slowly but none the less surely extinguished. A stop ought to be put to the existing condition of things, the trapper and the storekeeper alike must be taught, by a determined refusal to buy, that low quality skins have no value. Then the hunter will wait until the fur bearing animals have arrived at their prime; and he will not require to take so many of them to realize a certain return, while the surviving animals will multiply and in their turn obtain that maturity without which they are comparatively worthless. The waste that annually occurs in connection with the fur trade is really enormous, so many causes which ought never to be lost sight of combining to detract from the value of the animals that are captured.—*Trade Review.*

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