

Unfair Methods of Departmental Stores.

The Trade Bulletin is not alone in decriing the unfair principle in business which underlies the methods of Departmental Stores. "Live and let live" has always been a recognized maxim in trade, but of late there has arisen a class of traders, who, in their endeavors to let none live but themselves, have added nearly every line of the retail trade to the dry goods business, which formerly was their only special line. Of these departmental monopolies the Toronto Saturday Night has the following:—

News-paper men have better opportunities than others to know of the damage being done to Toronto and the towns of the province by departmental stores, and I feel safe in saying that eight out of ten newspaper men in Toronto are opposed to departmental stores, knowing them to be great gambling institutions devoted to the humbugging of the masses and to the ruining of the shopkeepers of the city. They know that the departmental store is the mother of sweatshops and of a very large progeny of evils that have recently begun to infest life in Toronto. There is probably not a newspaper in the city whose best writers would not jump at a chance to rouse the city and the province from the hypnotic sleep in which they lie while being plundered. But newspapers are commercial enterprises. Chivalric notions may prevail in the editorial rooms, but not in the business office. As commercial enterprises, then, if all the loftier pretenses of journalism are to be openly abandoned, where do the newspapers stand in the matter?

Saturday Night, after enumerating a number of important firms in Toronto which have failed or gone out of business as a result of the increase in departmental store methods, says:—"I am convinced that several influential newspaper men in Toronto are almost persuaded by their own knowledge of the facts to throw down the gauntlet to departmental stores. The Toronto Board of Trade could cause them to act now if the Board would take up the question. And why should the Toronto Board of Trade timidly witness the commercial massacre that is taking place under their eyes? I cannot possibly mention facts that are unknown to the Board of Trade, but possibly I may bring some facts into striking relationship to each other. The customs receipts at Toronto for the month of February last past were \$300,000 less than for the corresponding month last year. Why? Largely because the wholesale trade of Toronto is being destroyed. The wiping out of hundreds of local stores has centred trade in a few departmental stores. The local wholesale houses are injured by the departmentals, and the loss of the city trade forces them to fall back upon the trade of the province. But what happens then? It is a well known fact in mercantile circles that of the annual business of nearly a million and a half done by the firm of Samson, Kennedy & Co., fully one million dollars' worth of it has been diverted to Montreal. Of the trade done by McMaster & Co., the same result is following fast. The reason is not far to seek. If a merchant in an outside town deals with a Toronto wholesaler and owes it \$5,000, and if that wholesaler fails, he is suddenly called upon to pay up. He can't. He must fail too. Other merchants, seeing this, become distrustful of Toronto houses, and, as quickly as they can, transfer their accounts to the Montreal houses, in which town department stores have not succeeded in working so much destruction upon wholesalers."

Our contemporary should know that Montreal wholesale firms are being placed in precisely the same position in regard to the departmental stores as those of Toronto, as the retail monopolists are now going past the large wholesale firms and buying direct from English houses or Canadian manufacturers. It is true that Montreal has not yet felt this revolution in trade methods as keenly as Toronto has, but it will be experienced here eventually just as severely as in the Queen city. As already stated in these columns, the unfair and unjust methods of the departmentals are revolutionizing trade in a manner which tends to demoralize it, and surely under such exceptional circumstances this is a fit subject for our Board of Trade to take cognizance of. It does not necessarily follow because the methods of departmental stores do not constitute a direct violation of the law, that therefore it is beyond the province of the Council of the Board of Trade. It has been advanced on behalf of the departmentals that it would be trespassing upon the liberty of the individual to attempt to prevent them doing business as they best see fit. This certainly is a very plausible way of putting it, but if, on the other hand, it can be shown that these investors are a positive injury to trade on the whole, which is being demoralized at the expense of the great majority of our business men who follow special lines, then we contend that an enquiry into this great cause of the disastrous disturbances in trade, which are at present going on, should be instituted by the Board of Trade. It is a well established fact that small traders in this city following special callings have been forced out of business by the departmentals, while others are being driven to the same inevitable end. This has been proved by instances given by the Trade Bulletin some time ago, in which landlords complained to us of the number of special line stores that had been thrown up on their hands and become vacant. And will it be contended for one moment that in the midst of this demoralizing disintegration of trade, it concerns not the function of our Board of Trade to investigate a matter which is creating such mischief in general trade? The Toronto people appear to be waking up to the full realization of the enormity of the evil, as will be seen by the following which we take from our Toronto contemporary above referred to.—"The impression that departmental stores can sell as cheaply as wholesale houses is absurd. The impression, that they do sell cheaper than other retail stores even, is false, unless in regard to a few articles every day which are advertised loudly to draw foolish people. Some dealers have associated in a demand that makers of certain articles shall refuse to sell to departmental stores on pain of being boycotted by all regular dealers."—Montreal Trade Bulletin.

United States Dry Goods Market

The market continues quiet, with buyers operating in a moderate way as they require supplies. Cotton goods are selling fairly but the market is unsatisfactory. The curtailed production is relieving the situation somewhat, but stocks continue excessive and values show little strength. Printed fabrics are going well, and the better grades of specialties meet with a good market. Ginghams are meeting with a fair demand and hold steady. Dress woolsens are showing a firmer tone. Mill agents have sold a fair amount of fall goods, and have in many instances withdrawn samples at present quotations. Wool is costing more, and there is a general mark-up in prices. Men's wear woolsens have been ordered fairly for fall, and manufacturers are now generally asking an advance for new orders.—Bradstreet's.

Leather and Boots and Shoes.

LEATHER.

The market remains quiet but firm, as tanners continue to hold out for better prices which boot and shoe manufacturers do not seem inclined to buy. A small lot of No. 2 sole have changed hands at 21½ to 22, but we hear of no round selling this week. Black leather continues firm, a lot of choice Ontario splits bringing 22c, and the same description is now being sold firmly at 23c. A fair volume of business is reported in Dongola and colored stock at a wide range of quotations, and we quote as follows:—No. 2 manufacturers' sole 21 to 22, jobbers' sole 21 to 23c, slaughter sole 22 to 24, waxed upper 25 to 32c, grained 25 to 31, buff 11 to 12½, splits 18 to 23c for Ontario, and 16 to 18c for Quebec, pebble 11 to 13c, glove 10 to 12c, Dongola 12 to 18c per foot, sheepskins 5 to 7c per foot, calfskins 18 to 20c per foot.

BOOTS AND SHOES.

The volume of spring business with manufacturers shows a decided increase upon that of a year ago. It is stated that an advance of 10 per cent in certain staple lines has been obtained for sorting goods, and that further advances will have to be established later on. Remittances have been fair during the past week.—Montreal Trade Bulletin.

The Kootenay Beef Market

We print in another column information which should be very welcome to the cattlemen of Southern Alberta. P. Burns, the West Kootenay butcher, is prepared to purchase this season all the beef cattle in the country. His trade in British Columbia is assuming rather enormous proportions, and is still rapidly growing. At the present time he is killing 800 animals a month, which is practically at the rate of 10,000 a year. At the present time we may almost say that the development of the mining industry in West Kootenay has only just commenced. Apart from the Crow's Nest Pass road, it is fully expected that the increase in development, and consequently in population will be phenomenal. The result of the construction of the Crow's Nest road will not only still further stimulate the activity in West Kootenay, but will be the means of thoroughly opening up the East Kootenay country, which is quite as extensive as, and considered by many to be richer than West Kootenay. With the demand for beef at the present moment fixed at 10,000 a year, it is pretty safe to say, in view of all the circumstances, that, before the year is out, these figures will be cast in the shade. With the opening of the East Kootenay district, and the direct communication which the Crow's Nest Pass road will give between the ranching and mining country, it is not extravagant to predict that 20,000 or even more beef cattle will be required next year to supply the demand. Even at the rate of 10,000 head per annum, it will take nearly all the beef cattle which southern Alberta has for export. Not the least pleasing feature of the present position is the price at which cattle are being contracted for by Mr. Burns. The difference at last regards four-year-old steers between the price he is giving and that received heretofore from other parties is that \$4 15c for all four-year-old steers without brand them. This will make a very considerable difference, enabling cattlemen to thoroughly clear up their beef each year instead of being back for another year, as they cannot stand shipment to the English market. MacLeod Gazette.