

though it looks like an accommodation, is not a good thing, it is only an inducement to buy more stuff at a time, and it loads a man up too heavily."

Wholesale houses who encourage or permit the return of this insidious custom—and there are many in Montreal as well as in Toronto and other cities doing so—must have short memories, or they must have small regard for the teachings of the past. It is only four years since, wearied with the renewals and over-lapping of credits that dating ahead had given rise to, the wholesale dry goods merchants of Montreal held meeting after meeting with the object of ending the practice. And for the past year or two credits have been shorter, in all lines. Grocery, hardware and shoe houses, as well as dry goods houses, have curtailed the time on their bills with manifest advantage to themselves and their customers. Yet to-day, we are told, while dry goods terms in Toronto are nominally four months from 1st of month following that in which they are bought, some houses have dated spring goods four months delivered in March, 4 months 1st May and some even 1st June. Montreal houses, we are informed, while adhering to short terms for cottons and to four months for certain British goods, sell Canadian on six months and have even offered six months from 1st May.

It is surely the height of folly to return, as some dry goods houses appear to be doing, to the long terms of five or six years ago. It is a bad symptom, for it looks as if goods were too plentiful when terms are thus relaxed. The excuse which is made, that competition compels it, and that "our neighbors are doing it, therefore we must," is unworthy and unsound. After long effort in the salutary direction of a cash basis and after the encouraging success of 1880 and 1881, with cleaner stocks, better payments and a healthier condition, it is a retrograde step now to offer six and eight months' credit, and one which it is the duty of the banks to discourage and if possible to stop.

FRANCE AND BRITISH COLONIAL TRADE.

The reasons why France, on a recent occasion, refused to consider the claim of the British Colonies "to share in the most favored nation treatment accorded to the United Kingdom," are stated in a recent communication from the colonial office to be:—"(1) the great diversity and frequent changes in the Colonial tariffs; (2) the high duties chargeable on French goods (in common with British and other goods) upon their introduction into some of the colonies, such

duties being in certain cases very much higher than would be chargeable on goods from those Colonies if imported into France under most favored nation treatment; and (3) the customs autonomy of some of the Colonies, and the inability of Her Majesty's Government to bind them." This letter, signed John Bromston, was written by the direction of the Earl of Kimberley, for the British and Colonial Union. It would appear from the statements it contains that France was asked to deal with the British Colonies in the lump, no distinction being made between Canada and the rest, though obviously the differences between the different colonies is so great that it does not fairly admit of the question being put in that form. If the colonial duties are high, for this very reason there is the more margin for making an advantageous bargain, in a reduction or remission of duties for a mutual advantage. All commercial treaties imply either a lowering or a remission of duties. Canada has before now made a bargain of this kind with France, which was carried out by means of reciprocal legislation. The objection that the colonies which possess customs autonomy cannot be bound by the British Government, is based on fact, but it forms no reason why we should not make our own international bargains, but the contrary. In the Cobden Treaty, from the benefits of which the colonies were excluded, France took care to secure for her pet colony, Algeria, "the treatment, in all respects, of the most favored nation." In doing so, she secured for her own favorite colony advantages which she is not now willing to extend to those of Great Britain. But the customs autonomy which Canada has obtained is a step in advance. The Cobden Treaty prohibited the colonies from laying any discriminating duties on French goods. This prohibition having been swept away, the stipulation can never be repeated in any future commercial treaty between England and any other country.

THE MIDLAND RAILWAY COMPANY'S MEETING.

At a meeting of the shareholders of the Midland Railway Company of Canada, held in London, April 20th, Mr. Halsey, the chairman, made a full statement of the affairs of the company. The earnings of the consolidated roads were rather more than sufficient to pay interest on the bonded debt. The President, Mr. Cox, estimates that the earnings this year will exceed those of 1881 by £50,000 stg. Mr. Halsey encourages the hope of a dividend for the stockholders in future. In the first fifteen weeks of the present year, the consolidated system earned

£47,524, as against £31,531 in the corresponding period of last year. A short time ago, the Midland proper was bankrupt, with a roadway of 140 miles. The consolidated roads have a mileage of 450 miles, and each section earns more than enough to pay interest on its bonded debt.

Mr. Halsey thinks it important that the consolidated Company, by possessing itself of the charter of the Toronto and Ottawa company, prevented the original owners from building a line over what the consolidated company considers its own territory. But whether the line will be built is left dubious, from what Mr. Halsey says. "We have," he says, possessed ourselves of the charter and made a small beginning of the work from the terminus of the Grand Junction in an easterly direction to Ottawa." But, and here comes the doubt "whether it will be extended to Perth and on to Ottawa, or even further—to Montreal—is a matter for the consideration of the new consolidated company." "If it be built hereafter"—not at present—"it will be because it will be proved to be advisable to build it, and for the small amount of money we have taken power to raise upon the line, when built it will surely pay its interest." "It is a matter for the future, and one which I only mention to-day by way of explanation, to show what Toronto and Ottawa mean in the combination of the Midland." All this looks at if there were no intention to build the road. As the Grand Trunk guarantees the bonds of the Grand Junction and the Toronto and Nipissing section, it seems probable that that company influenced the Midland to get possession of the Toronto and Ottawa charter for the purpose of preventing the road being built.

Mr. Halsey says the Midland could by the construction of some 50 miles of road as compared with 185 of the Ontario and Quebec to Perth and Toronto, give the Great Western a competing line with the Grand Trunk. It is difficult to believe that this is meant to be taken in earnest. The language is probably intended to be diplomatic, and to prevent the Great Western aiding the construction of the Ontario and Quebec line. But this was a work of supererogation; for already had the Grand Trunk swallowed up the Great Western and rendered it powerless to promote the line in question. Further developments in the railway world will be awaited with interest.

—The harbor of St. John is to be placed in commission, after long negotiations between the City Council, the Board of Trade, and the Ottawa Government. On Tuesday of last week a meeting of the Board was held and Messrs. Magee, Vroom, and Starr re-