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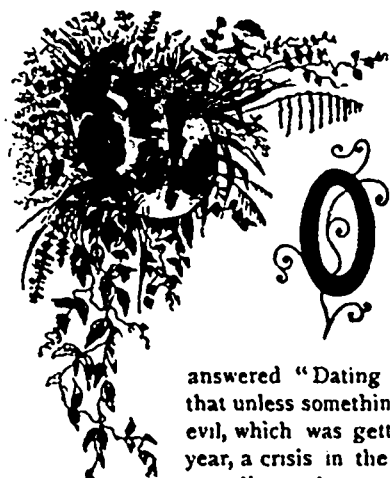
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THE EVIL OF DATING AHEAD.

ONE day recently while conversing with a wholesale merchant, we asked him what was in his opinion the greatest evil in the dry goods trade at the present time, and he promptly answered "Dating ahead." He felt convinced that unless something was done to crush out this evil, which was getting worse and worse every year, a crisis in the trade was inevitable at no very distant day, such as had never been experienced before in the history of Canada. "Why" said he "to give you an illustration of how houses, who are endeavoring to do a conservative business, are handicapped, I was waited upon some days ago by a customer who has always paid cash and he told me flatly that unless I gave him his sorting up goods dated 1st October, he would not deal with me any longer. He told me he had been offered these terms by two other houses, and when he mentioned their names, I was fairly staggered. I reasoned with him and endeavored to show him how much better off, in the end, he would be by continuing to do a cash business, but it was useless. I refused point blank to follow the example of the two firms he mentioned, and lost a good customer." This is not by any means a solitary case, and confirms the views expressed by an old retail merchant, in our last issue, that the dry goods trade is drifting back to the time when railways and travelers were unknown in the country.

The Drapers' Record of London, England, expresses the following sensible views on the subject: "The home trade houses have only themselves to blame. The Scotch houses have the discredit of being the first to start the system. They invaded England, and only succeeded in gaining a footing by offering buyers more advan-

tageous terms. London houses followed suit, and are now, perhaps, the greatest sinners. Manchester men were slow to follow, but have been compelled to do so or lose old connections all over the country. It is believed that one Manchester house still holds out for the old system, but the rest have gone over like a flock of sheep. Formerly, post-dating was confined to special show days, that is, occasions when a stock had been bought, and it was offered to the trade on exceptional terms. In such cases the merchant held out inducements for drapers to come and clear the stocks. He considered he was getting an advantage from the draper in being able to quit his stock to suit his convenience, and therefore gave the draper a lengthened credit. But the system presently extended to all season goods, and intimation was given that all purchases of new season goods would be dated forward two months. The system is now general. It applies practically over the whole trade for all classes of goods and at all times. The worst of it is that the practice is growing. It sprang out of the determination of certain persons to beat their competitors. The desire still lives, and the process is still going on. No finality has been touched, and unless the trade at large have the sense to combine in some measure and agree not to go beyond a certain point, this grumbling will go on in increasing volume. No one can help them. The evil is in themselves and their lack of backbone."

In a letter sent us in reply to our enquiry as to dress goods, a retailer touches upon the long credit system as follows: "Before closing, let me say that I have read your articles on lengthened credits, with interest. The wholesale people need not think that they alone suffer from this evil. In my own town, we have had recently, more than one instance of reckless dealing in slaughter sales through this long dating, followed by a smash-up. Some of my best customers bought their supplies from these dealers, which, of course, was so much of a loss to me. The wholesalers have nobody to blame but themselves. Their cry is "buy, buy," and the fact is, we can get any terms we like from them. I, for one, would like to see the terms of credit shortened, and I am sure there are many others of the same opinion. Then there would be honest competition and we would have a chance of making a livelihood out of the business, which, let me tell you, is not an easy thing as times are. I have done all my purchasing from one house for several years back, but it has required all my resolution to resist the inducements offered by other houses, and if a change in the terms of credit is not made soon, I will be forced, against my better judgement, to purchase my supplies from the house that will give me the longest dating. It will be a great blessing when business, both wholesale and retail, is done on a cash basis. I try to get my customers to pay cash by holding out certain inducements, and I am glad to say many of them have come to recognize the advantages they receive. Still, there are those who will not pay cash, although they are not lacking in worldly means, and it is to them more particularly that retailers have to thank for keeping them in purgatory about the time the wholesalers' bills come due. This is a burning question for a Retailers' Association to take up, and I sincerely hope the time will soon come when each city and town will have its association, for really, something of the kind is badly needed."