

The Commercial

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EARLY CLOSING OF STORES.

A commercial traveller who has read the articles in THE COMMERCIAL upon early closing, states that in his wanderings throughout the country, he has observed that the best and most successful business men are the first to move in favor of early closing. The towns where early closing is in force, he claims, are the brightest and most progressive places, and have the most successful business men. The towns where the stores are kept open the latest, are the slowest and poorest business places, and have the fewest successful business men. These features, the traveller thought, form a coincidence worthy of note, and he was not backward in expressing his views upon the case. According to his idea, long hours are not in keeping with business ability. The progressive, capable business man would be the first to discard the long hours's system, because it shows a bad business habit. The more incapable business men would be more likely to hold to an absurd and unbusiness-like system. One point the commercial traveller particularly wished to emphasize is, that the early closing merchants, he claimed, are the most successful in making their collections, while those who are particularly noted for long hours, are not successful in this respect. He gave a reason for this, that those who closed up early, could devote half an hour or so in the evening looking over their accounts, and planning to keep up with their work.

Whatever truth there may be in the statement, that the towns where early closing is in force have the best business men, THE COMMERCIAL believes it shows good business policy to close up stores at what might be called an early hour. It follows, that to keep open late is poor business policy. Taking the older cities of the east, it will be found that the most successful establishments have been the first to adopt early closing. In this journal last week we gave the experience of two of the largest retail houses in Canada, upon this question. One firm decided to close at six o'clock in the evening on Saturday, the same as other days of the week, and though the house was doing a very large trade in the evening, the change did not prove a disadvantage, but instead of a decrease, business increased right along, and at less expense.

Most of the arguments advanced in favor of long hours are nonsensical. The public can very soon be educated into proper habits in buying their ordinary store wares. If business places closed at six o'clock every day in the week, and all the year around, we venture to say that the public would very soon cease to regard it as a hardship, while it would be a great advantage to the merchant and a source of joy to his employees. It costs money to keep stores open, and the most expensive time is the evening, when artificial light has to be supplied. If merchants can shorten their hours, without materially decreasing their sales, they

will decrease their expense and increase their profits, besides rendering life a more pleasant experience to themselves and those about them. That early closing does not injure business, is the experience of those who have tested the plan.

MANUFACTURES IN MANITOBA.

At the present time we hear a great many complaints from residents of this province, and specially from residents of the city of Winnipeg, about the lack of manufacturing institutions in the cities and towns of Manitoba. With those complaints is often displayed a great share of petulance and inclination to abuse local business men, and capitalists interested here because they do not at once start industrial institutions, and set them in operation. Often do we hear Winnipeggers assert that the city never will amount to anything, until it becomes somewhat of a manufacturing centre; and while this sweeping assertion cannot be accepted in full, it must be acknowledged that there is some truth in it. The people who make the complaints and assertions must as a rule get credit for having the welfare of this and other cities at heart, but they are entitled to very little credit for either the knowledge they possess, or to the enquiry they have made as to the prospect of manufacturing concerns becoming profitable investments; and it is a noteworthy fact, that from persons who are in a position to comprehend existing circumstances, the complaints are few, and are never made unless accompanied by an expression of regret, that the obstacles in the way of profitable manufacturing are numerous, and the field for engaging therein very limited indeed.

It would be well if all interested would make a little study of the obstacles in the way of profitable manufacturing; for, without doubt, if the public generally did understand those obstacles and difficulties, many could and would be removed by united public action. It may be worth the trouble, therefore, to note here a few of those that may be considered the greatest and most insurmountable.

In looking at this question of profitable manufacturing, the first barrier we meet with is the cost of skilled labor here, and the difficulty of procuring it, compared with the situation in eastern cities, where are located the institutions with which our local manufacturers would have to compete. If we take the city of Toronto, for instance, where the wages paid for skilled labor is probably higher, on the average, than in any other eastern city, and compare it with Winnipeg, we find that the wages of the skilled mechanic are in the neighborhood of fifty per cent higher in the latter than in the former, and what is still worse, it is difficult if not impossible to see where this gap can be to any material extent narrowed as matters now stand. Even with this great difference in remuneration, employers here, who require skilled labor here beyond the limit of the local supply, often find it hard to induce eastern artisans to locate in this province. It must be acknowledged that many of the objections to be met are purely imaginary, and the result of the long years of misrepresentation to which Manitoba was subjected in the east.

But imaginary as they may be to the Ontario artisan, they are real difficulties to the Manitoban seeking skilled labor.

But there are genuine reasons for the eastern artisan's objections to locating here even to better himself in a financial way; and this is plain to any inquirer who will compare the state of the city with that of Toronto. In the latter city as a rule working men's houses are cozy, warm in the winter, supplied with all modern conveniences, including an abundance of fresh clean water, and are moderate in rent. In Winnipeg, with an incomplete sewer system, and a much more incomplete water main system, modern conveniences are the exception not the rule even in the residences of the middle classes, and are unknown in the homes of the artisan. Then in Toronto there is an abundance of small houses suitable for artisans, built of solid brick and stone, and capable of being made comfortable in any weather or temperature; whereas the home available for the Winnipeg artisan is, with a rare exception, a wooden shack, not at all suited for the extremes of this northern climate, and in which he and his family have to undergo inconvenience and even suffering at times, which are never known in the home of the eastern man. Why this is the case is a mystery, even when considered from a point of profitable investment. Through all the times of depression in Winnipeg succeeding the boom of 1881-82, when empty houses in the city could be numbered in scores, if not by the hundred, small houses at moderate rents for laboring men and their families were rarely vacant, and yet those houses, were of a very poor class. The fact is, there is an ever increasing demand for small houses, and the supply is not increasing with the demand. If five hundred small houses, brick built, supplied with modern conveniences and facilities for economical heating in the winter, say in terraces of half a dozen or more, were to be constructed during this summer, and offered for rent at say from \$120 to \$200 a year, not one would be vacant next Christmas Day. A few of the present shacks might be, and would remain so, until their owners either removed them or repaired them sufficiently to make them an attraction for homes. Among all the fields for investment in this city, there is none more certain of proving profitable, than this one of constructing comfortable dwellings for the laboring classes, and once these are available, the only valid objection of the artisan to life in Winnipeg is taken away. But it requires an enlarged sewer system, an extended water works system, and several other works of civic improvement, before the work of providing good artisan homes can be carried out to any great extent. When will those civic improvements come? is the question asked by many. When they do come the enterprise will not be wanting to construct good homes for the laboring classes, and thus make the city a desirable location for the artisan population.

After the labor question is solved, that of a fuel supply is the greatest trouble. Last fall when the coal from the Souris fields was brought to this and other cities, it was announced that the fuel problem was solved for Manitoba. But