

THE DEPARTMENT STORE MOVEMENT.

A DEFENCE OF THIS MODERN DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE.

THE REVIEW does not agree with the arguments advanced in the following article. Still, it is well to know what the defenders of the department stores can say for themselves. As reasonable an article of this class as has lately appeared is from the pen of E. Strauss in *The Iron Age*, and it is given for the benefit of readers. He says :

"Many lines of trade have been revolutionized by the department stores. Where they have appeared and were successfully managed they have forced scores of specialty stores out of existence. Their influence has been so strongly felt in some states that efforts have been made to bring the matter before the Legislature with the intention to tax them out of existence.

"The original and most primitive form of the department store is the general merchandise or country store. These general stores usually prosper, when properly managed, until the village outgrows them. Now comes the specialist. A puts all his capital in dry goods; B puts his in groceries; C puts his into hardware and D puts his into drugs, and so to the end of the alphabet. He who puts his entire time, skill and capital into one line, provided there is enough trade within reach to support him, can sell cheaper and give better service to the public than he who divides his resources between half a dozen lines. Therefore as soon as the village becomes large enough to support special stores, the general stores disappear. The first hardware man in a growing village usually finds that all his neighbors keep a little hardware. If he is up to date and manages properly, he will soon teach these general stores that 'a little hardware' does not longer pay. The superiority of the specialists is clearly seen among professional men as well as among merchants. A lawyer who makes land cases a specialty usually gets larger fees and more work than the general lawyer, so does the insurance, railroad and criminal lawyer. The dentist can give your jaw a more scientific if not less painful twist than the doctor, and the oculist can give better treatment to the eyes than the general practitioner. The specialist thrives best in a large city or populous district, while the general practitioner has the advantage in a sparsely settled locality. These facts have been considered settled until the modern department store appeared.

"This modern creation differs from the general country store, inasmuch as it is a combination and co-operation of large capital and the highest skill of specialists. Here a competent man manages each department. When 25 dealers who occupy 25 stores and have 25 sets of expenses combine and co-operate under one roof and under one central management, there is a decided economy which is keenly felt by competitors. In a similar manner a hospital with the latest scientific apparatus and skilled specialists of every kind can treat diseases to better advantage than a single specialist or general practitioner.

"In nature as well as in commerce the cold, cruel doctrine of Malthus seems to be the law. The fecundity of animals is held in check by lack of food, not enough to eat, and the liability of being eaten. While merchants are not subjected to the latter inconvenience the department store destroys the smaller dealer as surely and effectually as a higher species of animal destroys the inferior.

"What can be done for the small dealer who is so ruthlessly destroyed? Nothing. He must adapt his affairs to the changed conditions of the times. Our tradition and system of government do not and should not encourage class legislation. Progress is naturally a great destroyer. The sewing machine has thrown many poor seamstresses out of employment. The whaleback has made worthless large capital invested in steamships. The poor Scotch weavers who commenced a riot when the power loom appeared and

the poor printers who went on a strike when the type-setting machine was introduced are to be pitied, but they could not and should not try to stop progress. The plain logic of the department store sounds to me like this: A, on account of his large capital, higher intelligence and superior system and organization is an impassable barrier to the success of B, on account of the latter's indolence, stupidity and waste; therefore the government should step in and fine and punish A to such an extent as to give B an equal opportunity. The only crime that A is accused of is that he sells goods cheaper and gives better service than B.

"The department store is a mile-post of a rapidly advancing civilization. It may still be considered in its infancy. How far it will ramify and spread, and to what extent it will displace other stores, and whether the final results will be beneficial or injurious to the public, are all unsettled questions. Who knows but that sooner or later new ideas and methods will come out of the sea of commercial evolution that will exterminate the department store as rapidly and surely as the latter is absorbing its near-by retailer?"

The above sounds very fine, but the opposition to department stores is based on economic principles just as sound as those used by the writer just quoted. The methods adopted by some big stores render them injurious to the commercial community. If they stopped these practices they would have to go out of business, or stick to legitimate courses. The merchants of the country simply propose to make big stores conform to certain recognized laws. That is all.

BRIEF NEWS OF THE TRADE.

OUR biggest season in velveteens, report John Macdonald & Co. The "Imperial" brand is having an enormous sale. Velveteens are now being made very fine, with a consequent demand for all purposes.

P. Garneau, Fils & Cie., Quebec, are headquarters for white and grey Turkish and linen huckaback towels.

W. R. Brock & Co. are showing six lines of special value braces to retail at 25c. All of these are clearing job lines, some of them worth double the price asked. See their farmers' heavy brace, W 82, to retail at same price.

For the midsummer and early fall trade there will be a big demand for braids. S. Greenshields, Son & Co. have many new effects in stock. Plain tubular and diamond tubular braid is now very popular, and is likely to maintain its popularity. Fancy soutache braids are also in demand, as well as Russia, in mohair, tinsel, mixed and plain tinsel.

P. Garneau, Fils & Cie., Quebec, are to the fore with black 6/4 venetian and twilled coatings.

Wyld, Grasett & Darling report that etofte pants and heavy pants for winter wear are receiving considerable attention. They say that their line of overalls is up-to-date and replete with good values.

CHEVIOT SUITS.

Chalcraft, Simpson & Co. are showing a fine range of fancy Scotch cheviot suits. They are tailors' fabrics and tailors' patterns, embracing all the new olive green, gray and brown shades in endless combination, checks, broken bars, invisible plaids and mixtures.

SMOKED GOODS.

In their new linen department Wyld, Grasett & Darling have a shipment of double damask table cloths and napkins, which are slightly smoked and which they are able to offer at a heavy reduction. As the smoking will wash out, the goods are a bargain.