

CANADIAN DRUGGIST.

DEVOTED TO THE INTERESTS OF THE GENERAL DRUG TRADE AND TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF PHARMACY.

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CANADIAN DRUGGIST.

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Toronto Drug Trade.

To say that the retail drug trade of Toronto was in a promising condition would be to express more optimism than the candor of the writer justifies him in doing. The business is virtually overdone of itself, outside of the competition from dry goods houses which has so recently demoralized a profitable portion of drug traffic.

It may seem unkind to say so, but we think that few who consider the matter for a moment will contradict us when we state that the presence of the Ontario College of Pharmacy in this city has been and will continue to be the bane of its drug trade. The attendance of students at the college naturally makes them familiar with the city and its attractions, and there are but few of them who, with means, and an exalted idea of the attractiveness of doing a city business, are unwilling to locate on some prominent corner, advertised as being suitable for a drug store. To this alone we ascribe the very large number of druggists this city contains—a number out of all proportion to public demands, and such as positively precludes the natural hopes of individual success.

In one district in Toronto where, seven years ago, five drug stores were to be found, to-day may be counted twenty. If it were an outlying district there would appear a reason for it, but, instead, it is in the heart of the city where the population has not increased 20 per cent. in that time. Still, the number continues to increase, and the profits to diminish; for, as each new-comer necessarily gets a share of trade, and the population is not coming fast enough to give it to him, he therefore

must deprive his neighboring druggists of a portion of their trade. Thus all suffer from over-competition somewhat, the older houses feeling it most, as they are in a position to compare their earlier and more prosperous days with those of the present, the result, as far as they are concerned, being that, feeling trade slipping from them in outlying quarters where they formerly drew from, they are tempted to aggravate matters by starting a branch.

Under the present state of trade, cutting would be the inevitable result but for some of the following reasons:—

In the feelings of city druggists there is a prompting of ethical propriety which forbids them taking a step in direct competitive antagonism to one another. The moral force exercised by the existence of the Retail Druggists' Association, even over those not its members, deters them from taking a step unsanctioned by it. These reasons undoubtedly exercise a potent influence, but possibly the most powerful deterrent, is the fact that only those financially strong could survive it. The financially strong do not consider cutting a profitable business, and hence do not take such a step until forced to in defence of their trade.

The old established firm of Hooper & Co., which stuck to the general price of drug sundries along with the other druggists of Toronto until they lost the sale of thousands of dollars worth of these goods and practically their trade in them altogether, only adopted a defensive attitude when threatened with a loss of their patent trade also, and even then only cutting on the well-advertised patents sold by dry goods houses.

Their action in an ethical sense is doubtless generally condemned, but in a consideration of the matter individually applicable to them, the wisdom of their course cannot well be denied. Under present circumstances they possess the advantages of competing with dry goods houses without suffering the loss of competition from druggists, while, at the same time, the proportion of their business subject to cut rates is so limited that in possessing the advantages of the advertisement secured by it to increase the demand for other articles they are more than compensated. The public is the same the world over, the cheapest seller secures the greatest number of buyers. If it were not so Toronto druggists would not be suffering from the deprivation of their drug sundry trade, as it is not sympathy for Eaton or others

that prompts purchasers to buy from them, but a cold calculative consideration for the contents of their pocket books.

The attempt made by the Toronto Association to cut off the supplies of cutters through Wholesale Drug and Proprietary Medicine Houses, did not meet with the success that the devoted work of its active members deserved. "The nimble penny eye succeeds, and as the Association has found that out, they have adopted a plan, based on that truism, to afflict those most interested in keeping patent remedies prominently before the public, namely, the manufacturers.

The druggists have ever been the sponsors, as it were, for all this class of preparations, and as they decline to continue to act as such without being fairly remunerated, they have determined to manufacture substitutes, which with a more perfect knowledge of their contents, they will feel safe in recommending. This may not be the true solution of this difficulty, but if unitedly carried out by the city druggists, it will undoubtedly have a marked effect in diminishing the sale of the late popular patent remedies in Toronto, and may possibly be sufficiently effective, as an obstructive measure to induce manufacturers to take such precautions as will effectively preclude their sale by dry goods houses. Come what will, the druggists are apparently determined to fight for what they believe to be their right. They will always retain a good portion of the patent medicine trade under any circumstances, and what they cannot retain they will damage as much as possible. The fight will not now be to cut off supplies, but to cut off demand by displacement.

The success of the experiment here will doubtless be watched with interest, where ever such trouble threatens, and a knowledge of this fact will serve to stimulate the Toronto members to act unitedly and forcefully in the maintenance of the policy they have adopted. Immediate decisive results cannot justly be expected, as all innovations take time, but if, as we would like to hope, the druggists of Toronto can maintain their present unity of action, even though it should be under a definite arrangement to cut on the present slaughtered articles, and can in one or two years time get profitable control of a proprietary trade that cannot by any possible means be encroached upon by dry goods houses, they will have made a temporary sacrifice to secure a permanent benefit which all will gladly be partakers of.