STOCK-TAKING.

AT this season of the year every merchant takes stock, or, if he doesn't, he expects the sheriff to do so shortly. There cannot be the least doubt that the stock will be entered up at its proper value by one of the parties.

Stock-taking is an old habit. It is said that Adam took stock when he left the Garden of Eden, and found he had one wife, two fig-leaf aprons, and a sad heart. Then everybody knows of that old Jewish saint who took stock the stock that had stripes, or bars, to distinguish them from those who had not. Then, some of the heathen who lived in those times took stock—that didn't belong to them, some people in the Western States have a similar habit.

But the stock-taking in which dry goods merchants are most interested is a modern invention, so modern that some merchants seem to think that they will be liable to imprisonment for infringing on a patent if they use it But we have taken the pains to investigate the situation, and can assure Canadian merchants that there is no danger to them from this source As the poet says, the right to take stock is "as free as the morning air."

Many merchants have a wrong idea of stock-taking. Some men in taking stock would just find out three things. the invoice price of all the goods unsold, the amounts owing wholesalers, and the amounts owing him. So firmly does this idea seem to have got hold of merchants, that many of them will enter up the suit they have been wearing for two years at its full cost price -$8.75. They never seem to realize that anything they have bought can depreciate in value, they never see the depreciation in that suit, until the second-hand clothes man remarks that he would give 25 cents for the suit, with a new shirt thrown in. But stock depreciates after the close of each season, and the merchant who recognizes this and acts accordingly, is the man who is making a success of his business.

To estimate stock at its true value is the secret of successful and beneficial stock-taking. The man who cannot see exactly what stock is worth what was paid for it, will not benefit much from the process It is like eating food and not digesting it. It is like lending a man five dollars for a couple of hours, and when he comes for another five, taking no lesson from the fact that the first five was not returned.

Stock-taking should separate the goats from the sheep. It should divide the stock into two classes the one class that is sound and healthy and doesn't need the doctor's care, and the other class that must be brought forward into the sunlight, undergo a surgical operation under the price-trimming knife, and then be discharged from hospital as soon as possible.

Such stock-taking teaches the taker that any price for last season's goods is better than holding them. Some goods can safely be held; others depreciate 25 per cent. each succeeding season. Stock-taking indicates these goods, and the merchant can only be benefitted if he brings out these goods and keeps his eye on them until they are gone.

When the stock has been taken at its proper value, and the liabilities and assets summed up, the profits for the year are shown. These profits should be sufficient to pay for the risk, the interest, and the merchant's salary, and leave a nice surplus. This surplus, and this surplus only is the net profit; the other amounts are merely earnings. The merchant should not make a mistake about this.

If the merchant has more than one class of business combined under his roof, each class should show its profits distinct Every department's profits should be shown singly. It is only thus that the merchant can discover what part of his business is a profitable venture, and what part of it may prove a maelstrom for his capital.

MARKED WEAKNESS IN RAW FURS.

THE raw fur market at present is in a very unsettled condition, in fact has been so throughout the present season. As the Montreal correspondent of the REVIEW noted early in the fall, the prospects pointed to low prices on all the leading lines of Canadian and other furs, and the course of events since that prediction was made early in December has fully borne it out. The natural result, of course, has been that operators in raw furs in Montreal, which is the leading market in Canada for the business, have been very reluctant buyers of all kinds of furs, stipulating in every case for figures which would allow them a margin sufficiently wide to protect them in almost any event on what purchases they have made. In fact, so much has this been the case, that sellers of raw furs from the country who visited Montreal to do business, have complained that there is a combination among the buyers who have come to an understanding this year to beat down raw furs below legitimate rates. It is needless to say that this is not the case, but that the present conservative course pursued by Montreal buyers of raw furs is due to the unsettled reports which are received from both the Continental, European, and London markets, and also New York. In fact it is almost a foregone conclusion with raw fur operators in Montreal that the March fur sales in London this year will be very much below the usual average of prices. Many of them, therefore, are refusing to buy any lines of furs even at the very lowest figures, and, all in all, the outlook for shipping furs is so blue that buyers scarcely know what they are justified in paying.

BRITAIN, CANADA, AUSTRALIA.

A FAST Atlantic service between Canada and Great Britain would be a paying speculation. More than that it would be a patriotic undertaking worthy of even a British statesman's notice and an honor to a Canadian. It is needed so that Canadian and British passengers and goods will cease to travel via New York.

An Australian service even better than is now in existence is needed, and it is to be hoped that Sir Chas. Tupper and Mr. James Huddart will be successful in convincing the Marquis of Ripon that a British subsidy would be a wise thing. Another and better steamship should be added to the line, and it would redound both to the benefit and glory of Great Britain, Canada, and Australia.

A Pacific cable is needed. It is needed now and should be laid now. Let Great Britain consider well the requests of the two fairest of her children, and strengthen the bonds, which unite the colonies to the Mother Country. Advancement is gradually being made towards an Empire—for commercial purposes only—which will stand united and strong in any war of tariffs. The bonds of this scattered Empire should be strengthened.