

# Leather World

## BOOT AND SHOE TRADE OF NEW-FOUNDLAND.

### Opportunities for Canadian Manufacturers.

The following article, written by an eminent Newfoundland boot and shoe manufacturer, will be of interest to leather and boot manufacturers in Canada, as giving a description of the pre-war trade of Newfoundland in leather. It will also serve to show what a market we have at our very door for Canadian manufactured boots and shoes and how at the present we are neglecting it.

To-day there are in Newfoundland six factories making boots, shoes, and footwear of all kinds—three in St. John's, two in Harbor Grace, and one in Carbonear, employing about 320 operatives. The pioneer of these, the Newfoundland Boot and Shoe Company, Ltd., was established in 1875, prior to which time nearly all the footwear used in the Island was imported from Britain, Hamburg, Montreal or Halifax. Three years previously the present manager of this pioneer factory, as agent for a Halifax firm, had sold shipments of footwear to firms in St. John's, which would take 120 tons ship freight, this being the first big sale of Halifax goods of this class in Newfoundland. Subsequently Halifax made very large sales, but of late years the trade with Britain and Canada has declined very greatly, and apart from the local manufactures, the imports of footwear are chiefly from America, where they make a much better looking, even if not so durable an article. Within the last ten years three of the six factories now operating, have come into existence, and all are understood to be working to virtually their full capacity. The output of the pioneer factory, which is much the largest, is about a quarter of a million dollars, and the output of the other factories together would be nearly \$450,000, making the total output of all six factories together about three-quarters of a million dollars. The local production could be increased considerably, but for scarcity of labor, it being difficult to maintain an adequate supply of skilled operatives.

### IMPORTS AMOUNT TO \$200,000.

As it is, however, there is still a large import, almost \$200,000 worth annually, of which Britain supplies us with only \$21,000 worth, and Canada with but \$15,000 worth, America sending us \$162,000 worth. Included in the latter are stocks of American footwear of special make. The Americans have captured this trade by putting up an attractive looking article, and advertising extensively, and local dealers have been sending their buyers to American markets every year latterly, whereas formerly they went to England. It is not contended, however, that the American article is as durable as the English, or even the local, but the style is the attractive feature. Our people are using lighter boots and shoes, and are buying more of them. Where formerly many patched boots were seen, now it is rarely any but poor people use these, and shoemakers on a small scale or "cobblers" are almost driven out of business by lack of trade.

It is believed, with regard to the increase in the purchases of footwear from America—from \$30,000 to \$162,000 the past ten years—the British and Canadian dealers could recapture a great deal of this trade if they would make the efforts to secure it that the Americans do, by sending travellers to study the requirements of the market, by producing more attractive models and by advertising more liberally.

It must be recognized, of course, that in the boot trade, British and Canadian makers have to face two conditions in the American trade that make serious trouble for them—"dumping" of the

excess production of certain factories and boots made by prison labor. There are about twenty firms in America competing for the Newfoundland market, and some dealers in this country sell only "job" lines of boots, both as bargains, or in other words "dumped into the Colony so as to avoid price-cutting in the home market."

### CANADA LOST TRADE.

The most surprising feature, however, of our changing boot and shoe trade is the decline in the value of our purchase in Canada—from \$77,000 to \$15,000 in the decade. Britain has only increased her sales to us from \$15,000 to \$21,000, this being partly due to purchases of special lines and partly due to the increased value of all such goods, but Canada's decline is astonishing when it is remembered that she enjoys the advantage of the closest proximity to Newfoundland and also that some very large boot and shoe factories exist in the Maritime Provinces, which claim to sell their product largely and profitably as far as the Rocky Mountains. Yet, as the figures show, America has robbed Canada of \$60,000 worth of trade, and has also increased her own sales another \$60,000. Not all of this increase, of course, is represented by additional boots and shoes; the stock used in the manufacture of these articles has doubled in value in the past ten years.

There figure largely in American imports of boots and shoes, special lines of men's and women's wear at high rates which are imported and sold both by general merchants and by local makers of boots and shoes for their better class of customers. Custom shoemaking, that is to say boots and shoes made to order, is virtually non-existent in this Colony. The duty on boots and shoes now coming into Newfoundland is now 44 per cent—ordinarily 40 per cent, (but with the surtax.)

Tanneries in Newfoundland might increase their output materially if conditions were such as to encourage more tanning being done locally. At present there are five tanneries, one large and four small, three being in St. John's and two in Harbor Grace, but the large one has recently shut down because of lack of capital. The value of the tannage annually—that is to say, hides treated from the first to the final process—is \$175,000—and in addition, leather, partly dressed, to the value of \$20,000 to \$25,000, is imported every year, and the currying process is completed here, which doubles its value. By the closing down of the Sudbury Tannery about \$50,000 to \$60,000 worth of labor annually will be lost to the Colony.

Of sole leather Canada's sales have dropped from \$30,000 ten years ago to \$22,000 now, while America's have increased from \$81,000 to \$131,000 in the same time. Of undressed leather, on the other hand (leather partly treated), the import is virtually altogether from Canada, though the sales have declined somewhat owing to local production. The imports from Canada were \$26,000 ten years ago, and are now only \$17,000. Britain and America supply us with virtually none of this material. In grain, buff, and pebbled leather, Canada, too, is our principal supplier, though here again, local manufacture is largely capturing the market. The imports from Canada in 1904 were \$24,600, and in 1912-13 they were only \$9,000, and imports from America declined from \$5,000 to \$1,600.

### UNITED STATES CONTROL.

In upper, cromo tanned, japanned and patent leather, the finished articles for the making of footwear, the United States practically controls the whole trade, our imports from the country having increased from \$7,000 to \$44,000 in the decade, while Canada and Britain sell us less than

\$2,000 each, a figure not representing more than double that of ten years ago. In passing it might be said that imports of harness leather into the Colony have shown no increase for the past ten years, and Britain's sales have dropped from \$2,000 to \$340, America and Canada absorbing the difference in about equal proportions.

Finally, as to hides, the imports last year amounted to \$67,000 worth, of which \$4,000 came from Britain, \$3,000 worth from Canada, and \$32,000 worth from America, against \$9,000 worth in 1903-04 of which only \$128 came from Britain, \$4,700 worth from Canada, and \$3,900 worth from America. The explanation, of course, of this increase is that all these imports have been made for the requirements of local tanneries, and the import of the finished article has declined correspondingly.

It ought to be possible to do the work of tanning at least half our annual product of seal skins here in the Colony. 125,000 of these skins at \$2 apiece would mean quite a business. Each skin would mean from 25 to 40 cents in labor.

It ought also to be possible to arrange that our vessels which carry fish to Brazil could bring back goat and kid skins for making of chrome and fine leathers, and also dry hides for conversion into sole leather.

## A Little Nonsense

### WANTED TO MAKE THE PACE.

A Georgian from up in the mountains came to town on his yearly visit with a wagonload of corn, sweet potatoes and other produce to exchange for groceries. As he approached the city limits he saw a sign: "Speed Limit 15 miles an Hour."

Poking his oxen frantically with his stick he muttered: "By golly! I don't believe we'll make it."

### A NEW ANIMAL.

Quite a number of years ago a member of the New Brunswick Legislature, whose agricultural knowledge was rather hazy, was speaking of the excellent work done by the Government, in introducing pure-bred stock into the province. "The Government," he declared, "have brought in the Clydesdale horses, the Shorthorn cattle, and the Hydraulic ram."

### IN A SAFE PLACE.

A man who was continuously losing his collar button while dressing, says the American Medical Journal, complained to his wife about it. With an ingenuity born of the use of hairpins, she told him to hold his collar button in his mouth. The next morning she was startled by an unusual commotion.

"What's the matter?" she asked, anxiously.

"I've swallowed the collar button," said the man.

"Well," responded his wife, "there's one comfort—for once in your life you know where it is."

### HE WAS A POOR SHOT.

On the range a party of recruits were firing their first course. The sergeant in charge noticed that one of them—a man named Smith—was missing the target every time.

At last, quite fed up with the man's bad firing, the sergeant went across to him and told him to go and shoot himself.

The man disappeared. A few seconds later a report was heard from the spot where Smith had gone to. The sergeant hurried to the spot and shouted: "Are you there, Smith?"

"Yes, sergeant," came the reply, "I've missed again!"