

A "MERCHANTS' DAY."

A good deal of interest is being taken by the wholesale trade in the proposal made in our columns to have one day a week, called "Merchants' Day," on which the railways would make special rates of passage for retailers from the country visiting the cities to make purchases from manufacturing or wholesale houses. The letter on the subject which we printed last week urged the example of cities in Great Britain and the United States in favor of the project, and contended that such a plan, if adopted, must prove of advantage to the buyer as well as to the seller; the writer also stated that there were "obvious advantages" to the railways in the plan proposed. This meant, no doubt, that, arguing from railway experience, in this case as well as others it would be found that every reduction of fare results in an increase of passenger traffic.

What seems to us most important among the results to be anticipated from instituting a "Merchants' Day" is that it would bring the retail merchant into direct and more frequent contact with the importer or manufacturer from whom he buys. This would be in many cases a good thing for the wholesale dealer. But an equally distinct advantage would accrue to the retailer, who would thus be brought into view of whole stocks from which to make his selection. And besides, he could more easily "sort up" his own stock from time to time. There are hundreds—we were about to say thousands—of cases in which houses go on selling to country shop-keepers through travellers or by sample for long periods, during which the principals in these transactions do not see each other from year's end to year's end. This state of things makes the commercial traveller too much master of the situation, for it is through him mainly that such sales as we have described are made. Nor would the proposed plan do away with the occupation of the travelling salesman, though it would tend to lessen the excessive number and improve the average quality of these servants of commerce. A commercial traveller of the right stamp will not object to occasional visits of his customer to the city. If he is loyal to his employer and proud of "the house," he will be glad to have his customer make acquaintance with his principal.

We regret that we have not room to-day to give *in extenso* the opinions we have obtained from wholesale men on this question. But it is of interest to state that the suggested plan will likely be considered at an early day by the Dry Goods Section of the Toronto Board of Trade. Meanwhile the *Mail* has given in recent issues much space to the opinions of merchants in this city, and they are almost all strongly favorable to the proposal of a "Merchants' Day."

The Coaticook Water Power Company applies for incorporation in Quebec, capital \$20,000. It proposes to construct reservoirs at the head waters of the Coaticook River. The applicants are Geo. Gale & Sons, G. O. Doak, A. H. Cummings & Son, and others.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS IN CANADA.

A casual visit to the Falls of Niagara was paid, on the first day of the week, by the members of the International Congress. After viewing the wonders of nature, in its great temple, they partook of supper, on the invitation of Mr. Wiman, at the Clifton House. There seems to have been an understanding, or at all events an attempt to make one, that there were to be no speeches with the dessert, but in lieu of this there was some talk. Mr. Wiman alone has been reported, and it was not to be expected that he should say much that was new on a subject on which he has spoken so often before.

After reminding the delegates that they were in the dominions of Queen Victoria, Mr. Wiman opened the subject of contiguity between Canada and the United States in these words: "For nearly 4,000 miles this rich and fertile country lies alongside the United States, divided only by an imaginary line, oftentimes by great lakes and rivers that should be a bond to unite them rather than a barrier to separate them. Yet the trade which both these vast countries should enjoy with each other has been restricted by an arbitrary Customs line, 4,000 miles long, which may be likened to a barbed-wire fence, over which one brother cannot trade with another brother for a bushel of potatoes without the intervention of the Government. It is true that the goods sold by the United States to the 5,000,000 of Canadians amount in the aggregate to as much as those sold to the 50,000,000 populating the southern nations represented by the delegates present." Mr. Wiman used the argument from contiguity as a reason for establishing absolute free trade between the two countries. If this argument is to be decisive of the question, it would carry us very far. If the fact of coterminous frontiers is to be made a reason for abolishing tariffs, all the countries whose territories touch on one another would be equally called upon to proclaim absolute free trade. According to this argument, there would be no reason for the existence of Custom houses between France and Belgium, France and Germany, France and Italy, between Turkey in Europe and Austria, or Austria and Russia. In many of these cases the boundaries are not much better defined by nature, if at all, than they are between the United States and Canada. Even in Asia, "scientific frontiers" are far from being the invariable rule. Between Afghanistan and Persia, Turkey and Persia, and Turkey and China, the removal of tariffs would be necessary. And if mere contiguity is all that is necessary the Himalayas would scarcely save the tariff between India and China, any more than the Pyrenees would be a reason for continuing the tariffs between France and Spain. To this extent, and much further, would the argument from contiguity carry us.

If to contiguity we add unity of language, the argument for the abolition of tariffs between Canada and the United States is slightly strengthened, but only to the extent that difference of language forms an

obstacle to commercial intercourse. If Canada and the United States could supply each other with products which they must otherwise fetch from the most distant parts of the earth, a strong ground for the entire abolition of tariffs would be adduced. Free trade between any two countries, and between all the different countries of the world, would bring undoubted advantages. But besides commerce other things have to be considered: national revenues have to be provided, and when they have for a long time been obtained largely by Customs duties it is not easy to make so complete a change as the abolition of tariffs would imply. For this and other reasons the Customs tariffs of Europe, Asia, and America are maintained. Nobody seriously believes, we imagine, that there is soon to be a sweeping away of Custom houses between the United States, on the one hand, and South and Central America and Canada on the other. Nobody believes that the International Congress will even open the way to such a consummation.

So long as she adheres to the fiscal system on which she at present relies, the United States can greatly extend the sale of her manufactures in foreign countries only by bargaining for their free admission and securing exception for this free admission. She cannot with her pampering tariff stand up against the free competition of the great manufacturing nations of Europe. And she can hope to achieve and maintain favorable reception for her manufactures in other countries only by being able to face the competition of all rivals, and to do this she must learn the secrets of cheap production. Some of these secrets she has, in different lines, already learnt, though the triumph is one which she is not anxious to vaunt, which she does not make a point of proclaiming, and which is continually denied, in her name, by pestilent flatterers of the manufacturing operatives. In some lines, United States manufacturers have undoubtedly learnt to get more labor for their money than their European, especially British, rivals know how to get. Appeals to Congress for protection against the "pauper labor of Europe" have not been in vain. On the whole, we do not doubt American manufacturers do pay somewhat higher wages than their European rivals, but the difference is a diminishing quantity, and it is sometimes on the other side. Under an exceptionally high tariff, such as exists in the Republic, the tendency of manufacturers is to rest and be thankful for the secured possession of the home market; no adequate effort is made to secure a proportionate share of foreign trade, which the sharpened energies of countries with a freer fiscal system supply. If the exaggerations of the American tariff were removed, domestic manufacturers would have to put forth their utmost exertions to secure a share of the domestic trade, and in proportion as they succeeded in doing so would be increased their ability to meet competition on every field. As a rule articles produced under an extremely high tariff are dear and not always good. Can any adequate reason be shown why Canada should be content to confine herself to a supply of this

kind, by discriminating try with the high tariff other? We confess we are convinced by the reasons for this purpose. It could by exceptional the manufacturers of the continent would have its supplies at except

Beyond all doubt, course between Canada States would be a mutual carry exclusion along be a doubtful good, if If Canada had from and parcel of the United it the other way, if the been part and parcel larger territory known would have been different then have been no separation, and in nationalities been unity where is we have to do with the two tariffs, two systems nationalities, and it the best of them.

SWINDLERS UNDER COMP

It is an experience with manufacturers chants to have applied individuals represent sounding names, professions These so-called "commissions" are often found or incorporated companies names assumed by get credit as such.

We have had lately to us in which credit way, and when the was no money, no asset nothing but a name the creditor went to goods bought at terms often pay cash and gradually work chases—he found the proprietor having other case the bill usual place, and the bailiff in charge, the manager of the company where. The bill was

If the professed name Unwashed Fancy the "Eastern and Food Distributors," of the Occidental H pretentiously named credit of a house word of enquiry as the personnel of the in order. If the officials at Ottawa capitals can attest details. If it is not personally unknown dom not to be over name to the extent credit. A word of premises.