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RAILWAY CONTRACTORS, SHIP BUILDERS,
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55 KING STREET.

New Developments in Shopping.

DEVELOPMENT is the order of the day. Everything is developing into something else, not even excepting animal life, although, by the way, that is very much a matter of talk, for nobody ever exactly sees one kind of animal turning into another, and people have to take it on trust. Of all the developments which we are quite sure about, none is so conspicuous, or on so grand a scale, as the development of shop-windows. Where it is all to end, we may shrewdly conjecture; making up our mind in the meanwhile to this, that the prodigious sums lavished in making shops attractive, must be compensated somehow by corresponding sums drawn from the pockets of purchasers; if not, so much the worse for those who speculate on giving a specially superfine look to their establishments.

In walking along the street, one naturally asks himself the question, why tradesmen should make such enormously expensive efforts to outdo each other in magnificence. As a matter of social economies, if it pay to do so in some cases, the gain does not fall the less heavily on the public. The requirements of the community are a fixed quantity. People do not drink tea, or wear hats, in proportion to the number and extent of large plate-glass windows. They can afford to buy so much of this or that, and, as a rule, the more they get for their money, the more they have to spare for something else. The costly embellishment of the place where a thing is sold accordingly means limitation of purchase—a species of general conspiracy to make articles dear and difficult of acquisition. Without actually speculating on the future of the shop-embellishment mania, we can see that it is in course of counteraction by a development of a different kind—what we

might term a retro-development, a going back to simplicity in trading. Looking at the splendours which invite attention, the world as much as says:—'We can stand this no longer. What do we care for your polished mahogany counters, your brilliant plate-glass, and all your other apparatus of finery? We tell you plainly that we wish to get as much as we can for our money, though it were sold to us in the dingy recesses of a cavern.' Outspoken observations of this quality followed by suitable acts, amount to a revolutionary insurrection against the great shop-keeping interest. The revolution is going on before our eyes.

It is curious to note how the general dissatisfaction was first demonstrated. There was no fussy clamour regarding the extravagant style in which sales were usually conducted. A humble class of persons, with an instinctive feeling that something was wrong, fell upon the device of uniting together to be their own shopkeepers: so that, whatever profit was going, they might have it to themselves. We doubt if anything short of the nerve, self-reliance, and common sense of Englishmen could have struck out his idea and operated on it to a thoroughly beneficial result. Co-operation had been previously tried in various quarters, but never on a principle susceptible of being expanded to enlarged dimensions. The honour of developing the novelty on a plan that could successfully take its place in the field of competition, belongs to a handful of operatives in Lancashire, which, if not the most polished, ranks as one of the most salient and enterprising of English counties. Let us go a little into the history of the movement.

We remember giving some popular lectures on the subject of co-operation in 1860, when few knew or cared much about it. Since then, it has made the most surprising ad-

vances, particularly in the central manufacturing towns of England and in London. It has not made any great way in Scotland, and we have heard nothing worth speaking about it in Ireland. A large concentrated population, general intelligence, skill in business management, and mutual trust, are the qualities required to make co-operation succeed. But above all, there must be an ability as well as a resolute determination to pay for everything with ready money. That, indeed, is the prime feature; and those who need or prefer to take credit in their purchases, must continue to deal in the ordinary shops. Co-operative trading may accordingly be considered to be a moral agency in cultivating habits of thrift and self-denial.

Some of our readers may possibly recollect what we said years ago as to the poor beginning of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers' Society, a co-operative concern composed of twenty-eight working-men, who set up a small store for the sale, among themselves, of provisions and clothing. Their input was a pound a piece—a united capital of £28; that was all. At the outset they were dreadfully laughed at, and there was no end of prophecies as to the failure of their project. Caring nothing for jeers or invidious prophecies, they went on their way. The thing took. From year to year, the number of members increased, till at length developing into gigantic dimensions, it carried all before it, and is one of the wonders of commerce. Just hear how the affairs of the society stood at the end of 1872. The number of members was 6,444; the amount of funds, £132,912; the business done in 1872 not less than £207,577, on which a profit was realised of £33,640. In these facts are offered an example of what may be done by co-operation when properly conducted. One material cause of the prosperous extension of this