

MEN OF THE TIMES.

MR. HUGH BLAIN.

"The force of his own merit makes his way."
—SHAKESPEARE.

Mr. Hugh Blain, of the firm Eby, Blain & Co., wholesale grocers, Toronto, is a man of the times in a twofold sense. His individuality is a product of the times, and is now sufficiently matured to be in turn an influence of the times. There are plenty of able people born in a particular period, but not of it, who never in their lives catch up to the spirit of the age. Such are brought up in the sole study of the past. Mr. Blain's education, experience and habits of thought have the unmistakable stamp of latter day ideas upon them. Being trained in the very stir of progress, he is to-day one of the live men whose activities are the forces that modify and develop the tendencies of the times.

Mr. Blain is a Canadian, and is now in the prime of life. He was born near Toronto in the township of King. His business career has been exclusively in Toronto. In 1886 he left school and went into the counting-house of Nerlich & Co., who yet do business as dealers in wholesale fancy goods in this city. He began as a youth working from 7 in the morning to 10 or 11 at night for \$5 a week. Long before he ended he was financial manager, and in 1875 he became a member of the firm. The discipline of his long hours, a detail in the business education of young men that is happily left out now, made him a worker.

He learnt then that the best way to dispose of an irksome duty is to get it done as quickly as possible. After five years as partner in the firm Nerlich & Co., he joined Mr Eby in the wholesale grocery firm Eby, Blain & Co. They opened at No. 11 Front St. East, next door to Smith & Keighley. When Messrs. Wm. Ramsay & Co. retired from business, Messrs. Eby, Blain & Co. moved into the premises vacated by them, on the south-west corner of Scott and Front streets. Messrs. Eby, Blain & Co. will make another move in June to the fine warehouse they have bought from the Hon. Frank Smith, which, when stocked and filled up by the incoming proprietors, will vie with any

wholesale grocery store on the continent. Some years ago Mr. Blain took quite an active part in politics, and was several times elected President of the Reform Association. Latterly he has shown little interest in political parties, but has given a good deal of attention to current problems in political economy. He is one of the most prominent advocates of the Business Tax, and was one of the most determined workers for the city's rights upon the esplanade question. He was chairman of the Plans and Construction committee of the Citizens' Association. It was this committee which got up the plan for the viaduct that created so much discus-

of the times. He was the treasurer of the same association for years. For three years Mr. Blain was president of the National Club, which numbers in its membership many distinguished Canadians, and which exercises a very considerable and beneficent influence upon the patriotism of the country. Mr. Blain was paymaster of the Queen's Own for some time, and at the time of the North West rebellion he took charge of the families of the regiment. None of these families were neglected, as the paymaster gave the most conscientious attention to their wants, and the city council always paid as he recommended.

There are many other connections in which Mr. Blain is well known. He is usually chosen to take a prominent place in any movement or

body with which he is connected. But it does not need the accident of office or position to bring him into public notice as one of any body of men with whom he is associated. His own parts, his own energies, suffice to bring him out in relief even against a background of brilliant men. He has a guiding motive in all that he attempts either alone or in conjunction with others, and the mainspring of that motive is the desire to make progress. What he touches he aims to improve, and therefore he takes hold of it earnestly and generally with success. While he holds, and has held, many offices in various institutions, none of them has, with him, been a sinecure. He was always a worker, whether in office or out of office, for the welfare of whatever interest he identified himself with.

His firm is a very prosperous one. Since it was formed its trade has grown enormously. During the past five years it has done an annual business never under \$1,000,000, and now very considerably above that sum. This is a big record. In that business nothing has been traded in but groceries. There was no liquor or provision trade connected with it, and the business was purely whole-

sale. All the bargains it has to give go to the direct benefit of the retailers, and not jobbers.

Every man who has succeeded as Mr. Blain has succeeded must have a sort of business creed. He must believe in the efficacy of practising some principles of conduct, and he must have practised them. Mr. Blain never promises to do what he cannot see his way clearly to do, and he never breaks a promise. That itself is a good strong element in the groundwork of a man's success. Another thing Mr. Blain evidently believed in was what Carlyle calls "the gospel of work." He was a worker, and made it a rule of conduct throughout his experience of a quarter of a century not to break the monotony of work by even taking a smoke during business hours. Mr. Blain is a clear writer, a ready and logical speaker and a very unassuming man.



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sion. In that notable association of citizens, which supplemented the work of Toronto's municipal council and drew applause from the whole body of the people, Mr. Blain was one of the two most conspicuous men. His controversial writings upon the combine question were published by the Wholesale Grocers' Association.

Mr. Blain is second Vice-president of the Toronto Board of Trade, to which office he has been elected twice. He has also been on the council of the Board of Trade for the last ten or twelve years. He is an ex-president of the Commercial Travelers' Association, a body which has an important place among the trade influences