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J. B. McLEAN,

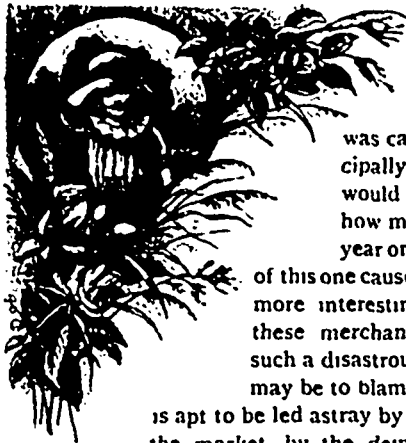
President.

CHAS. MORRISON,

Editor and Business Manager.

Address all communications to the Editor.

INFLUENCES TO BE RESISTED.



THE recent failure of a large retail dry goods house in a Western city was caused, we are informed, principally through over-stocking. It would be interesting to know just how many failures within the past year or two could be laid at the door of this one cause alone, and it would be still more interesting to know what induced these merchants to place themselves in such a disastrous position. The merchant may be to blame to a certain extent, as he is apt to be led astray by the desire to be the first in the market, by the demand of his customers for variety and novelty, or by the expectation of "better times," but from what we can gather we are inclined to think that the evil is due more to the importunity of traveling salesmen. So keen has the competition among the wholesale houses developed that each has to keep a small army of travelers on the road who are constantly importuning merchants to buy whether they are in need of the goods or not. We are not finding fault with the travelers as most of them are simply carrying out their instructions to secure orders at all hazards. There are, of course, jobbers who are wise enough to exercise due caution in filling orders unless they are satisfied that the buyer is perfectly sound and that the orders are not out of proportion to the conditions of trade and the buyer's means of selling and paying for the goods, but it is equally true that there are others whose policy is to get their goods out of stock no matter what the consequences may be. The travelers of such firms as the latter must of necessity sell goods otherwise their occupation is gone. It is nothing to them that the merchant has already a sufficient supply for the season's trade, or that he may be on the brink of insolvency; all that they care for is to get an order. Whether or not the man pays

is a question for others, or for the future. The satisfaction and credit to them is now and for them, and is the only tangible fact often considered. In this way merchants are continually being led, coaxed, and driven into the trap by buying too many goods. A dull season may eventuate with the result that they are left with a lot of goods on their shelves, thereby losing the use of the capital invested in it until the next season, besides running the risk of the entire loss of that capital, or a portion thereof, by its being then old stock, and perhaps superseded by a better or more stylish article in the market. The safest course is for a merchant to buy only such quantities as his business experience tells him, even in a bad season, he can sell and pay for. Then, if a bad season comes, he has, most likely, been enabled to discount his bill, and got rid of his moderate stock, while his neighbor, who looked for a great trade and could not withstand the blandishments of the "Knights of the road," was unable to take advantage of the discount offered on his large bill, and goes over the season with his shelves piled high with unsaleable stock, which still must be paid for. Should a good season come, the merchant who has bought moderately has, perhaps, been compelled to purchase again, possibly to better advantage, for the season being well spent, he may have the chance of buying at a reduction on early prices, and with a knowledge of what to buy. But suppose he should run out of a certain line of goods and lose a few sales before being able to replace them, what is the disadvantage in the loss of the profit on a few sales in comparison with the disadvantage of locking up in old stock not only profits but capital as well as profits. As a rule, the oftener a man turns over his capital in business, the faster will it accumulate. Stock that is held over is eating itself up in insurance, wear and tear, change of style and demand, and locking up of capital. The careful buyer will not buy with a view to the largest trade possible, but to the smallest trade probable. With such it should not be so much a question of how much he can sell, but how much he can pay for. A merchant nowadays, has only to step on the train almost at his very door, and in a few hours he is in the heart of the wholesale trade of one of our large cities; therefore he has all the advantage of buying right at his door. There was some excuse for a merchant overstocking himself a quarter of a century ago when the visits of traveling salesmen were few and far between, and goods had to be bought to last for several months owing to the difficulties of transportation and travel, but there can be no such excuse now. There are merchants, we are well aware of, for whom this article may have little or no interest as they are sensible enough to understand that they know their own business requirements better than anyone else, and are quite capable of withstanding the seductive influences of the genial traveling salesman. There are, however, many who would do well to take the advice offered to heart, and we would ask them to bear in mind that there is profit in buying as well as in selling, and that they may lose more in the former than they make in the latter. It is no doubt a praiseworthy ambition and a legitimate advertisement to be the first in showing new goods and to be looked upon as the heaviest buyer, but wise old heads in business do not judge entirely of the amount of profits by the number of empty boxes upon the sidewalk.