



Scenes in a Modern Canadian Shoe Factory.

The photograph on the left shows a corner of the hand turn lasting room. The right-hand photograph is a view of the fitting room, where many girls are employed in sewing operations.

Shoe Manufacturing Maintains Employment

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As Mr. Weaver points out in this review of the achievements of Canada's shoe manufacturing industry, there are today shoe manufacturing plants in 70 cities, towns and villages in seven provinces. These plants give employment to close to 15,000 persons and they produce over 18,000,000 pairs of leather boots and shoes per year. Their products have attained a high reputation for quality and serviceability and in fact the industry has become one of which Canadians may well be proud.

THE making of shoes has been one of the earliest industries in most countries. Even under primitive conditions, a domestic supply of cattle provided the material for use for protection of the feet. The shoe industry is, therefore, a natural or native industry to a peculiar degree and shoe manufacturing has been one of the first industries to be established. In Canada, shoe manufacturing has its roots back in the days of the Old Regime. As early as 1667, a communication from the Jesuits in Canada to Old France stated that, as a country could not be formed entirely without the assistance of manufacturers, an industry was already in operation making shoes and hats and another was contemplated for linen and leather. In the same year there were twenty shoemakers in the entire

territory now comprising the Dominion of Canada.

There have been many changes since those early days. The old handicraft system has given place to highly specialized and ingenious machinery, but the shoe industry remains in a special sense as a native and natural industry, with interests which are very close to those of the common people. It is relatively a small-unit industry. In certain other branches of business a very large capital investment is required. In the manufacture of shoes, however, much of the machinery is available only on lease and, under this system, it has been possible to commence the manufacture of shoes with a comparatively small investment. As a matter of fact, a very large proportion of the more ambitious shoe workers look forward to the time when they can have their own shoe manufacturing plants. Most of the shoe manufacturing businesses in Canada were commenced in a small way. Scores and even hundreds have proved unsuccessful because of the severity of competition, but there are today shoe manufacturing plants in seventy cities, towns and villages in seven of the Provinces, stretching from Nova Scotia to British Columbia.

These plants give employment to close to 15,000 persons and, even during the very difficult period of the last four or five years, employment has been well maintained. Reduction in

purchasing power has resulted in a demand for cheaper footwear. Prices have been cut and the manufacturers' profits have been very meagre, while many factories have been operated at an actual loss, but the Canadian shoe industry has continued to produce over 18,000,000 pairs of leather boots and shoes per year and has been a factor of very great importance in maintaining employment. The severity of competition is indicated by the fact that nearly 10 per cent in number of all the shoe factories fail every year, but the industry continues to give employment and to supply the footwear requirements of the Canadian people at prices which leave only an exceedingly scant margin over actual production costs. It is important to note also that the Canadian shoe manufacturing industry is a large market for other industries in the Dominion and thus provides employment indirectly as well as directly. Indeed, shoe manufacturing in Canada maintains employment in supply industries for almost as many persons as are employed directly in the manufacturing of shoes.

The severe and unrestrained competition amongst nearly 190 shoe manufacturing plants in Canada leaves no place for the inefficient or the extravagant and constitutes a very real protection to the Canadian trade and public. The products of the different factories are continually un-

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On the left is a section of the cutting room where the first operations on the leather take place. The photograph on the right shows the Goodyear welt lasting and making departments.

der comparison by the retailers as well as the public and in some classes of shoes even a difference of half a cent per pair between the prices of two manufacturers may decide which firm is to get the business. No large fortunes have been made in shoe manufacturing, for this industry is largely in the hands of men of small or only moderate means, many of whom have problems of making a livelihood and paying their bills which are as difficult as those of almost any other class in the community.

Gradual Development

The development of the industry has been gradual but progressive. While the home market has been vast in geographical extent, it has been small in population and this situation has entailed problems and difficulties. For years the finer lines of shoes—more particularly in the women's branch of the industry—were imported from the United States. Prejudices had to be overcome and the development in Canada of the finer lines of footwear was gradual and difficult. The story of how that has been accomplished constitutes an industrial record of which this industry may well be proud.

Canada and the cause of the Allies were well served by the industry during the war. In addition to meeting the requirements of the civilian population in Canada, the Canadian shoe manufacturers supplied 2,300,000 pairs of army boots at prices on which the average net profit was not more than a few cents per pair. Indeed, the prices paid by the Dominion Government for army boots were substan-

tially lower than those paid by the United States for similar footwear. Orders for heavy trench boots were executed by Canadian shoe factories at prices even lower in some cases than were being paid in the United Kingdom for a comparable product. Every soldier in uniform in Canada wore made-in-Canada boots while in training and also every Canadian soldier who went overseas wore boots produced by Canadian labor in Canadian factories. Moreover, the Canadian-made trench boot was accepted by the British authorities for active service and orders were placed in the Dominion for Imperial Stores account.

War conditions, despite the difficulties which they brought, gave a decided fillip to the manufacture of fine shoes in this country. Even before the war, Canadian shoe factories were producing high quality, thoroughly-reliable footwear, which compared favourably with that imported from the United States, but comparatively few of the Canadian factories were producing the same range of widths as were offered by United States producers. The slightly increased tariff protection in 1906-07 had encouraged the Canadian manufacturers to offer effective competition with imports in the finer lines of shoes and the war tax and rapidly advancing prices in the United States gave the Canadian manufacturers a unique opportunity and made possible a marked development in the manufacture of widths as well as in style and finish.

Since the war there has been a continued development in the production of the finer lines of footwear, until today the Canadian factories are

offering shoes which in quality, design and finish are fully equal to the best products of the older countries and, in some cases, are superior. In 1924, a Canadian shoe manufacturing firm was awarded first prize in a great international competition in Rome, Italy. Canadian-made shoes are being sold in the British Isles and most of the British Dominions and were being sold also in New York and other style centres in the United States until the increase in the United States tariff practically excluded them from that country.

Diversity of Footwear

By reason of the great variety of climatic conditions and occupations, Canada requires a greater diversity of types and classes of footwear than almost any other country in the world. Those requirements are being supplied by the Canadian manufacturers, from the heaviest type of miners' boots or lumbermen's oil-tan shoe-packs and larrigans to the finest and daintiest of artistic productions in women's evening footwear. The Canadian industry is supplying all those varied requirements with shoes of which it has no cause to be ashamed and today there is no sound reason or excuse for any Canadian to wear imported footwear.

The achievements of peace may be less spectacular than those of war, but are not less important and the part which has been played by the shoe manufacturing industry during the depression which commenced in 1929 has been one of honorable and efficient service. Reference already has been made to the extent to which

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