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J. B. MACLEAN, MANAGER.

European Branch:
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R. HARGREAVES, Agent.

THE FIGHT AGAINST BIG STORES.

A BILL has been introduced in the Legislature of Illinois aimed at the big department stores of Chicago. It classifies trades into 75 different kinds, and indicates the lines which one merchant may deal in. The hardware man may carry so many lines, the grocer so many; the furniture man so many, and a separate store is required when a merchant wishes to engage in several lines of business. The bill applies to all cities in the state with more than 100,000 population, so that the general stores of the town and country are not affected by it.

The bill is not likely to pass, since one similar to it was introduced into the State Senate a few years ago, and came to nothing. However, its introduction indicates that western merchants are not giving up the fight, and that they propose to agitate until they bring the big stores into public notice as injurious to the community so far as they cut prices below living rates.

Many good people think nothing can be done in this matter. They argue this way: the city department store is simply a development of the general country store adapted

to a larger centre of population; restrictive legislation would probably be illegal; popular opinion would be against us, as people like to get cheap goods. And so on. We have heard some excellent people talk this way. Keep an eye on them, and you will find they purchase at these stores themselves, and then deplore the depression of trade through excessive competition and cut-throat prices.

Our answer is this: We would like to see the booksellers and stationers of Canada conduct their business with the same enterprise, careful buying and push that characterizes some big stores. Any virtues these stores have let us imitate. But we do think that selling below cost and sensational advertisements regarding bargains at ridiculous figures are injurious to the whole country. Can't you see why? Some one is robbed when an article is sold below cost. It may not be you. It may not be the department store. If not, it must be the man (the labor) who made the goods. The community suffers in the slaughter, and though you don't feel it directly, you will ultimately as a member of the community.

Therefore, the fight should go on as long as department stores disregard sound business principles. What is bright, attractive, enterprising about them is good. The unbusiness-like methods are bad, and when they cut the life out of certain lines of trade and get their profit on other lines, where people pay a fancy price without knowing it, these stores injure the community and must be stopped. There is no grievance

without its remedy, and there must be a remedy for this one.

THE POST OFFICE AND THE TRADE.

MR. MULOCK, the new Postmaster-General, has started in to enhance the revenues of his Department. For one thing he proposes to re-impose the postage on newspapers which have been carried free through the mails for 15 years. He can settle this point with the newspapers.

Another supposed "reform" affects booksellers and newsdealers. For some time they have been given the privilege of mailing magazines to subscribers in bulk, paying the postage in money on the whole package. This has saved labor both to the dealer and the post office. The dealer has been saved the trouble of stamping each periodical, and the post office staff has been relieved the trouble of cancelling each stamp. The privilege has been stopped, more, apparently, because it is a special privilege than because it will save money. The chances are it will increase the post office staff. However, that is for the Minister to consider.

But where the interests of our trade come in is in this: It gives the United States dealer an advantage. The Canadian mails, under the international postal treaty, carry tons of paper-covered literature throughout the Dominion free. Canada has the corresponding service given to her by the United States. But this country doesn't begin to send into the States the quantities of books, magazines and papers which we carry for them. It is a one-sided bargain and before