

DEPARTMENT STORES.

THE department store, as we have it to-day, is accepted by the casual observer as the giant offspring of the antiquated general store of primitive days, and the result of natural evolution in trade. For this reason people are led to remark when these great concerns are criticized, "How can we prevent business from following the natural channels of trade without blocking the wheels of progress?" If this assumption were correct, their point would be well taken. On the contrary, natural evolution tends to separate and classify rather than to concentrate and combine. The natural evolution of trade is more accurately illustrated in the specialty store—as the drug store, the dry goods store, the crockery store, the candy store, the grocery store, etc. That the idea of a department store was not the conception of a mind experienced in the trades is proved by the fact that R. H. Macy, the founder of the first New York department store, was a mariner instead of a "counter jumper." So quietly and unostentatiously did this institution slip into a niche in the great business world, that, like Shakespeare, its natal day is now shrouded in mystery, if it were ever definitely known.

The prime motives that led to the organization of the department store were economy and selfishness, with, perhaps, the convenience of the shopper as a very remote consideration. A grand economy was instituted in the concentration of many interests under one general management, thereby dispensing with a multitude of small proprietors, distributing the expense of rent, light, heat and other incidentals, and, at the same time, making a magnificent establishment possible. The selfish motive was to overcome competition, stifle it, if such a result were incident to success, with an instrument that was above competition.

Wanamaker refuses to classify his business as a department store, choosing rather to designate it in his advertisements "a collection of stores, each complete in itself." This is, perhaps, true, as his store, when compared with the many thousands marching under the banner "department stores," is recognized as being

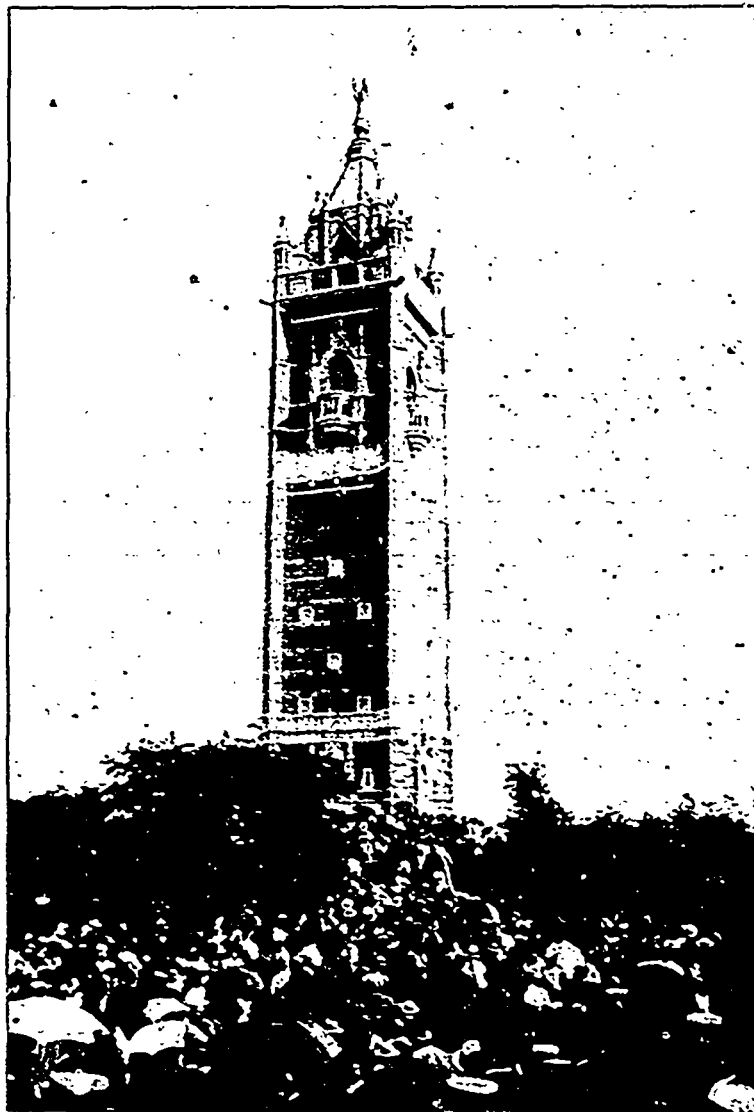
more of a cooperative store, where the employe shares the gains in addition to his salary for immediate services rendered. This is one great step in progress toward the recognition by employers of the brotherhood of man. Thus, we see that the seeds of the "Golden Rule" have been planted even in the business world, and perhaps the dormant sunshine of some great master hearts will awaken, warming them into being till there shall be a general drift toward the nobler relations between the servant and the master.

How well the department store answered the designs of its founders, the recent efforts in the State of Illinois to effect legislation directly against it attests. War was declared against the Chicago department stores by the smaller traders in and out of the city, the fight being watched with the keenest interest by merchants of every class throughout the United States. Here, as on the real field of battle, victory for one meant defeat for the other, hence the paramount importance of the decision of this the first charge, as upon it depended the future life or death of the department store.

The smaller merchants combined to the number of 6,000, as the Cook County Business Men's Association, with the avowed determination to sweep the department store from the face of the earth—Chicago—with the legislative broom. With this brilliant picture before the mind's eye, a bill was prepared, the provisions being "that no man or firm should conduct more than one line of business under one roof and within four walls. It graded the art of merchandising into about 60 groups. Grocers were to be allowed to sell some articles that did not strictly come under the head of groceries. Butchers were to have similar small privileges, but they were not to go beyond certain limits, etc." A committee of 300 were appointed, who, headed by a brass band, made the trip to Springfield to present to that august body—the Illinois

Legislature—their golden treasure for consideration and passage. But, alas and alack, these legislative bodies are as versatile, capricious and coquetting as is the Kansas weather. Like the Irishman's flea, one never knows just when he has his thumb securely fastened upon one—as this presumptuous "noble 300" learned to their sorrow when this cold and heartless body most un pityingly cast aside their hearts' idol. The bill did not pass. The bright plumage droops; drum is muffled; the quick, elastic step is changed for one of inelasticity as the "300 homeward plod their weary way."

Had the effort prevailed, certain Chicago department stores would have been obliged to pay an annual tax of \$100,000 to



The Cabor Memorial Tower, erected at Bristol, Eng., in memory of the discoverer of America.