

THE COMMERCIAL

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D. W. BUCHANAN,
Publisher.

The Commercial certainly enjoys a very much larger circulation among the business community of the vast region lying between Lake Superior and the Pacific Coast, than any other paper in Canada, daily or weekly. The Commercial also reaches the leading wholesale, commission, manufacturing and financial houses of Eastern Canada.

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WORRIES OF BUSINESS.

Every one has troubles of his own. Farmers and mechanics sometimes speak as though business men were the favored ones. People not in trade have little idea of the worries and annoyances which business people have to meet and contend with every day. Of one of these worries we propose to speak briefly.

One of the most annoying and most frequent causes of worry on the part of business men in almost every description of trade, is reports which come in of cutting in prices on underselling by a competitor. Cutting in prices to an unreasonable extent is always a bad thing. When a man is struggling to make an honest living and pay 100 cents in the dollar, it is a cause of much unrest to him to be frequently told that he is being undersold, especially when he knows that the goods cannot be sold below his prices on a legitimate business basis.

These reports of underselling are, we again say, one of the great causes of worry to business men, and we make the assertion here that most of the reports of this nature are not founded on fact. If this be true it would appear that much of the annoyance caused to business men on this account, is unnecessary, and that if the real facts were known, there would be little cause for worry.

Retail dealers have their full share of worries of this nature. They are

told every day by their customers, that Mr. so and so is selling exactly the same article at a much lower price than they are asking for it. In nine cases out of ten we may safely say, the customer who makes statements of this kind is wrong. He may not always be lying, but he is in error. Consumers as a rule are not competent judges of the goods they are purchasing. They may think the lower priced article is the same, but the probability is that it is a cheaper class of goods. Even where the goods could be compared together, in many cases the consumer would not be able to pick out the most costly article, though there might be a very considerable difference in value. Consumers who go from one store to another, and report that Mr. so and so has exactly the same article at a much lower price, are simply mistaken in probably nine cases out of ten. The writer was in a shoe store the other day when a customer came in and asked to be shown some shoes. He asked the price of one pair, and started back in astonishment as he explained that he could buy exactly the same shoe at another store at such a price. The price named was so far below the price asked by the dealer that it was evident at once the customer had made a mistake. He was positive, however, as people who make such statements usually are, that the goods were exactly the same, and finally went off in a huff because the merchant tried to persuade him that there must be a mistake somewhere, as the price he said the shoes were offered at in the other store was far below the cost of the goods.

The average retail dealer has a great many worries of this nature to contend with, and if he be inclined to believe the statements made, he will be in continual hot water about being undersold by competitors. Sometimes reports of this nature lead to senseless cutting in prices between competitors, when, if the matter were traced back, it would be found that either a mistake had been made, or a falsehood stated.

But retailers are not the only ones who are worried about underselling. The jobber has his full share of worries of this nature. He is frequently regaled with serious complaints from his travellers on the road, about the low prices offered by his competitors. As in the case of the retail dealer, the majority of these reports are not founded on fact. The retailer who says that he is buying an article at a lower price from another house, does not always mean to lie outright, but the effect of his statement often amounts to the same thing. Sometimes he may, like the retailer's customer, be laboring under a mistake.

Sometimes he may make such a statement to test the market as it were. He may fancy that he is not getting the closest price obtainable, and may just be making a bluff to see what the effect will be. Sometimes the retailer may make a statement of this nature to get rid of a traveller with whom he does not wish to do business. Various other reasons might be given, all leading to the same conclusion that if the facts were known, the reported underselling would not turn out to be a very serious affair after all.

The writer very recently came across two cases, one immediately after the other, in which reports of underselling had caused considerable worry to local jobbers. Circumstances led to the discovery, shortly afterwards, that in both these cases the reports were utterly false. In one case a grocery traveller wrote in to the effect that he was being undersold on a certain line of goods, and urged that the price quoted by his house would have to be reduced. Time proved that no such prices had been offered as were quoted to him. In the other case a traveller wrote to the effect that a competitor had quoted much lower prices to one of their customers, in consequence of which he was unable to secure the expected order. An investigation showed that the statement made to the traveller was utterly without truth, the prices quoted by both houses being the same. The moral is, that business men, whether retailers or jobbers, should not accept statements of this nature as correct. In the great majority of cases there is either a mistake or a misrepresentation in connection with the matter. Before engaging in an unprofitable and foolish price-cutting contest, merchants will do well to ascertain just how much truth there is in reports of underselling. In the majority of cases they may take it for granted that the actual underselling is not as serious a matter as reported.

A NEW GRAIN DISTRICT.

This is the first season that grain from points along the Calgary and Edmonton railway has been a feature of our grain trade. A few odd cars have been handled by the Winnipeg grain firms in recent previous years, but this season the available surplus of grain in northern Alberta has been sufficient to attract some attention from the Winnipeg trade. As a result a number of elevators have been established by Winnipeg firms at points along the Calgary and Edmonton railway in Northern Alberta. Oats have been grown to a considerable extent in the Edmonton district, and as in previous years the surplus