

RUNNING ACCOUNTS.

One of the most serious obstacles, says the *Nebraska Trade Journal*, in the way of success in retail trade is the giving of credit. It is the more serious because it has come to be recognized as a necessity, and the merchant has no choice in the matter. Some houses doing a strictly cash business are to be found, but they are only the exception which proves the rule. As the custom is fixed, all we can do is to try and deal intelligently with it. In the first place short and complete settlements should be insisted upon. In the next place, the customer's ability to pay must be carefully considered. If a business man wants credit he is compelled to run the gauntlets of inquisitive credit sent to him by commercial rating agencies. If he cannot make a satisfactory showing he is denied the credit. Why, then, should not the mechanic or artisan who wants credit to the end of the week or month, as the case may be, for the necessities of life, not be willing to make a full statement of his ability to pay before he receives credit? We have known of cases where a prospective customer has left a merchant in high dudgeon because he was closely questioned in regard to his affairs. But the merchant can congratulate himself on having got rid of such a customer. Once the merchant is fully advised as to the amount and permanency of a customer's income, he can estimate with a tolerable certainty the element of risk that enters into the deal.

He knows if a man is only getting \$50 per month, he cannot in safety spend more than two-fifths of it for groceries and provisions. In many instances where customers have been unable to pay their bills, the merchants themselves have been to blame. The tendency of most people to buy more when they are running an account than when the cash is paid at each purchase is proverbial. Merchants sometimes take advantage of this tendency and suffer for it in the end. If merchants would be honest with their patrons there would be fewer defaulted accounts and fewer blacklisted customers. In the character of the goods selected there is a chance for fine discrimination and the exercise of considerable judgment. Sometimes housewives are endowed with faculties that serve a good purpose here, and sometimes they are not. The merchant should be on the alert and stand ready to check any extravagant tendency. If the monthly allowance is small, dried instead of canned fruits should be selected. If eggs are high, the remark that "they are too dear just now for table use" may be of benefit to some halting purchaser, and one dozen is taken for cooking purposes instead of three or four. By such means

can accounts be kept within the ability of the purchaser to pay.

Then there is the well-to-do customer, who orders by telephone or sends a servant, and whose money is always ready when wanted. This class alone is enough to refute the theory that credit is not necessary in retail business. Credit is absolutely essential in the conduct of the business of the world. The evils which arise from it are from its abuse, and not from the system itself.

If people bought only that which they were compelled to have and only as much as they could pay for at the appointed time, surely no harm could come of it. On the other hand, harm and hardship could come from denying the laboring man credit to the end of his wage period, which in only a few cases extends beyond the period of thirty days. In extending credit to this class, it should be confined to such things as are absolutely necessary for the support of the family. Credit conducted in this way is a very great accommodation, and frequently prevents hardship, which in its absence would have to be endured by women and children.

HORTICULTURE.

In a recent address before the Nova Scotia School of Horticulture, Dr. Lawson delivered an excellent address on horticulture, which he defined as a specialized form of agriculture, less extensive in its scale, but more thorough in its operations, the main question being not how shall we increase the amount of crop over the largest acreage at the least expenditure, but rather by what means shall we reach the highest perfection in quality of produce. Horticulture, he said, produces things to eat, like agriculture, but the horticulturist's efforts are mainly directed to improving their quality. It is not mere high farming, but consists of this, combined with the application of knowledge, thought and experience, and all possible appliances to secure the end in view.

He also spoke of what was grown in the small holdings of Holland and in the gardens of Kent, England, fully demonstrating the possibilities of enlarging the amount of produce raised from the soil, of improving the health of the farm population, and adding to their domestic comforts by a more varied diet of fresh vegetables and fruits. Commenting on this, a number of journals urge the different governments to bestow on horticulture the same attention which they have extended to the dairy industries. The *Montreal Trade Review* thus expresses itself:

The neglect of garden culture by the rural population of Canada is very lament-

able, as thereby sources of profit are ignored, the advantages of a more varied and healthful diet are put aside, and one of the pleasures of country life to young and old is abandoned. The farmers' gardens in the old world are made by skilful cultivation to yield more per rood than any part of the farm, as well as a source of delight to the family, and to visitors. An acre, or half an acre, or less, given up to a garden can be cultivated more thoroughly than large areas. Spading is necessary to get the best results, and processes too tedious for use on a large scale, as thorough weeding, earthing up, use of the best fertilizers and so on, but the yield of fruits and vegetables from a garden so treated is large.

THE COST OF PRODUCTION.

A paper was read at the National Furniture Manufacturers' Association, on the cost of production, some points from which are worth considering. The writer, M. C. Pallen, of Sheboygan, Wis., said:

"Several plans have occurred to my mind in regard to meeting competition. The plan that seems the most feasible to unite upon, is for all members of a combination to subscribe to an amount equal to 1 per cent. of their capital stock and surplus on January 1st, for stock in a company to be formed for the general good, with directors and officers, elected as usual, the directors to act also as a board of arbitrators. Secure some large plant, centrally located and in a state whose laws are favorable. Employ several competent and reliable men to canvass such territory as seems necessary. With this outfit, it would seem a strong influence might be exerted to prevent reasonable prices, once established, having to fall back again. It is not to be supposed that I would recommend the adoption of a uniform scale of prices without some provision for meeting the different circumstances under which business is conducted. This could be arranged by establishing discounts, to be allowed on sales in proportion to the amount of a shipment under one bill of lading. What these discounts should be could be better determined after establishing a standard list of prices, but there should be scope to meet the different conditions of trade. By allowing full freight to any and every point on shipments amounting to \$100 or more, probably the least complication would arise. On shipments amounting to less than \$100, one-half the freight might be allowed, providing, in both cases, the freight bills be returned for credit within five days from receipt of goods. Due consideration would, of course, have to be given to such an arrangement at the time of adjusting prices."