

BOOKS AND NOTIONS

ORGAN OF THE

Book, News and Stationery Associations of Canada.

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TRADE TOPICS.



A CLEAR atmosphere is a necessary circumstance when healthy growth is desired. The events of the past year have cleared the wholesale stationery atmosphere in such a thorough manner that those who

have managed to live through the fog have now the benefit of a most healthy air. With the number of wholesale stationery houses reduced by two, the rest have already begun to profit by an increased trade. Those that remain are firm as rocks, and ten years buffeting by waves of bad trade would hardly make a noticeable effect on their stability. Margins are close, but the quantity sold lessens the danger of this defect in trade.

But with regard to the city the wholesalers are not doing what they should do. Nearly every wholesale house has one or more hangers on, who canvas the business men for orders much to the detriment of the retail stationers of the city. These hangers-on are often unreliable men, who pay no taxes, are poor citizens, and carry their stocks in their hands. They buy in little and sell in little. They injure such men as Stanton & McCrue, Grand & Toy, Blight Bros., etc. That is, they injure the men who have a moral right to the retail

trade of the city, and if they are losing it, they are losing it because the wholesaler has been overly anxious to sell goods. If such a system as this is to obtain, the retail system will be blighted, and surely it has enough difficulties to contend with without being injured by those who should aid it. It reminds one of the class of beasts which bring forth young only to eat them up. The retail trade is the necessary offspring of the wholesale trade, and should be treated as such.

The wholesalers often complain that the retail buyers are too conservative. When new articles are brought out and carefully advertised, many applications are received from men not in the trade for agencies, and the trade will perhaps take no notice of the article. Every new article that a wholesaler gets is worthy of at least serious consideration by every live retailer. The wholesaler by long years of study knows pretty well what the trade can sell and what it cannot. The retailer who is too pig-headed to examine new goods, or descriptions of these, is mighty slow, or else he is in that peculiar summer-fly situation—stuck on himself. The wholesaler may make mistakes, so may the retailer; but for this reason the retailer should not entirely abhor the new things brought out by the wholesaler.

The best retailers of the country get a sample of every new article and they try it. If it goes they get in a small shipment. If these sell, they order again, watching against the overdoing of it. Thus a retailer gains a reputation for having every thing new. Last summer the writer was in a small town, and a retail stationer made a moan to him about a peddler who came into the town and sold a gross of a certain article he had in stock. When asked how much stock he had, he answered a quarter-dozen. Had he ever advertised them? No. Shown then in his window? No. Pushed them over the counter? No. That shows where conservatism lost a number of sales. No matter how small the stock on hand of a new article, show it, explain it and push it. Whether it will take can then be decided, but not until then. Staples need little pushing, but new articles and lines must always be brought to buyers' notice in a thorough and capable manner.

BOOKS AND NOTIONS publishes, from time to time, descriptions of various new articles as they come out. It also publishes notes of the new lines shown each month by the leading wholesalers. It does this gratuitously, and from such notices receives not a cent of revenue. They are inserted as information for the great body of retailers in whose interest this journal is published. Moreover

this journal is willing to stake its reputation on the truth of every description and notice which appears in its columns. Retailers throughout the country have not time to look through the samples of every traveler who comes along and pick the wheat out from among the—to them—chaff. A traveler is misled by absence sometimes. New lines are often neglected by travelers, who make a run on the lines they are more familiar with. Retailers cannot visit the city every month. BOOKS AND NOTIONS tries to render these circumstances less costly, by publishing reliable information concerning what is new. Whether dealers order or not makes no difference to this journal, but it is satisfactory to know that the retailers of Canada depend on this journal for information which is always new, and which is always opportune, reliable and useful.

When a new merchant is placing orders, or when an old merchant is opening a new account with a wholesaler, he should not get angry when asked about his standing and for reference. The wholesaler wants your trade if you are sound; if you are not, he doesn't, and you have no right to ask it. It is simply a business caution which should be admired rather than denounced. False modesty on this question should not be tolerated or harbored. Business confidences should be given in a business-like manner. Hence caution on the part of wholesalers is in the long run for the benefit of the retailer.

Retailers are often induced to place all their orders with one firm on the promise of better terms. A sharp tradesman, the other day, raised the question of whether this end was attained. Suppose a man owes \$2,000 and all to one house; that house will perhaps consider this amount too large to allow of a renewal of some note or some similar privilege. Suppose, on the other hand, that the same man owes \$2,000, but to five different houses. The house to whom he owes \$400 thinks it very small—and there are five of them—and he could get a renewal at any one or all of the five. This is a point which retailers would do well to consider, when concentrating their trade. Dealers who never need renewals need give the case but trivial consideration. These are the lucky ones.

The wholesale booksellers and stationers are strongly in favor of a National Insolvency Law as they are disgusted with the different proceedings which obtain in each of the seven provinces. They find themselves in awkward positions at times. Since the Ontario Act was discredited by a decision of the Court of Appeal of Ontario in June last, the necessity has become more pressing.