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JOBBER VS. IMPORTING RETAILER.

LAST month we pointed out that the increased amount of importing being done by the departmental stores in such cities as Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg, St. John, etc., would lead to the jobbers in these cities opening a retail department. One or two instances of this combination are already to be found in the Maritime Provinces, and soon others will appear.

But how the jobber will meet the increased competition of the importing retailer in large towns or small cities where there is no jobbing house to open a retail department, is a question yet unanswered. THE REVIEW has discovered that a plan is being matured. Whether that plan is feasible may be a matter of opinion, but on the face it seems quite possible of a profitable consummation.

This plan, as stated by a wholesaler, who avers he has had the idea for several years, is as follows. Suppose there are twenty large towns, in each of which is one large retailer who imports direct at fairly low prices, sells close, advertises strongly, and gathers to himself the bulk of the retail trade in that town. By so doing, he crushes down small competitors and leaves little trade to be secured by the jobber. Supposing there are ten Montreal and Toronto jobbers who find themselves affected by this change in the source of supply. They meet together and agree to apportion the care of these towns by lot among

them, each taking two. A. B. & Co. are jobbers, and they get two towns to "take care of," namely Smithville and Brown-town. In each of these two towns, A. B. & Co. erect neat and commodious stores and put in a stock. They commence to do a retail trade managed by experienced retail merchants. And then—well, the result must be imagined.

This is the plan this gentleman proposes, and it is certainly an ingenious one. The mere fact that such a plan is being considered proves that THE REVIEW was correct in its two previous articles, in which it was pointed out that the jobbers had begun to feel the competition of the importing retailer. It is quite natural that the jobber should resent this loss of trade, and seek means to prevent any further loss, and to recover what has been taken away. It is, perhaps, just as natural for a retailer doing a business of from \$200,000 to \$1,000,000 a year to desire to import for himself. When the two tendencies come into contact, new phases of trade conduct are bound to appear.

The jobbers are certainly not going to adopt this plan at once. It is a trump card to keep for the last trick. They are still hopeful that they may be able to hold their trade under existing methods. They claim that a number of retailers who have commenced importing have, during the past five years, increased their stocks 25 to 50 per cent., and, were they forced to realize on them now, would find that they had lost rather than gained by their new method of buying. They claim that the retailer who buys in Toronto or Montreal from half a dozen large jobbers gets the benefit of the combined experiences of 25 or 30 buyers who are studying the wants of this market, and who have selected foreign goods on the basis of this experience, while the importing retailer buys from a range of samples which includes goods made for a variety of nations and a diversity of climates. They claim that the importing retailer has not equal advantages with the importing jobber, and cannot lay his goods down in Canada for more than 5 or 10 per cent. less than the jobber offers them for, and that this is nothing compared with the privilege of getting the right goods at the right time and in the exact quantity required.

There is another feature which shows the increased competition between these two classes. This is the increased number of supply accounts that may now be found in this country. A jobber finds that he is getting very little trade from a good-sized town, and he chooses some honest but impecunious retailer, and starts him on a supply account. That the jobbers have found this a necessity is much to be lamented.

The outcome of this quiet struggle will be watched with much interest, not only by those directly concerned, but by business and commercial men generally.