MONTHLY COLLECTIONS.

THE great objection among retailers to monthly collections is the fact that the drop-letter postage is two cents per letter. It seems *unfortunate that such an excellent system as this should be negatived by a faulty postage system.* Our postage costs us dear, because the federal government has seen fit to use the postal system as a colonizer, and for this reason many offices are kept open and postal routes used which do not nearly pay expenses. True, we have had a certain reform in having an ounce rate of three cents instead of the same rate for a half-ounce. But nevertheless the two-cent drop letter rate bears heavily on business men in the matter of statements. In England statements can be sent for the same rate as printed circulars, and if a regulation such as this were adopted by the Postmaster-General, it would be a great boon to business men. All other classes of drop-letters might be left at the present rate. This would not mean a serious loss to the department; in fact the history of such changes shows that it would increase rather than diminish revenue. Moreover, the prosperity of the government depends on the progress of trade, and this would be a powerful factor in putting business on a firmer footing. It would allow of statements of accounts being sent out more promptly; it would induce a shorter credit system, it would aid prompt settlements, and thus benefit business generally.

Monthly settlements are useful to business men, both creditors and debtors. It teaches the debtor carefulness in the amount of credit he assumes; it *helps the creditor in obtaining* prompt remittances and settlements. In a large business it is positively necessary. In a small business it is not so necessary, nor so profitable, because where accounts are small the the expense is as great as where the accounts are large. But even in this case the arguments used above regarding cheaper postage for statements apply just as fully, because in this class of businesses accounts must be rendered at least once every three months, and thus the amount of postage is as heavy, correspondingly, as where the larger class of business houses send out monthly statements.

No dealer should allow any account to run longer than three months, unless *there is a counter account, and* even then there should be an adjustment and striking of balances every quarter. Where customers are agricultural there might be an exception with regard to certain customers, but here we are leaving exceptions out of consideration. Each dealer must arrange for his own exceptions. But to allow an account of any size to run for longer than three months is like driving along the edge of a precipice—you cannot tell at what moment you may be thrown over and crushed in the fall. It is not safe.

The great departmental stores in the cities do a strictly cash business, and consequently can afford to sell on closer margins. Thus the retailers of this country, outside of these big bazaar stores, are cutting their own throats. Men pay cash—why? Simply because they are forced to. But if a man knows he can get credit, he will not pay cash. This is a rule to which there are, we are glad to say, a few exceptions. But the men who pay cash in the modern retail business of this country are very foolish—because they lose the interest on their money, which they might otherwise receive. A cash customer is seldom treated with more respect than a credit customer, often with less. Thus it is seen that it rests entirely with dealers themselves as to whether short credits and few losses, or long credits and many losses, shall be their practice and experience. In nine out of every ten failures the fault is bad debts and poor financiering, and the sooner monthly or quarterly settlements are adopted the sooner the retail business will be on the solid rock.

OUR MONTREAL LETTER.

The aggregate movement in dry goods and allied lines since our last letter has been fair on the whole; but *during the latter portion of October* and the first part of November there was some falling off in trade. This, however, is not considered unfavorable, for dealers generally expected a gradual diminution in the sorting-up trade. Speaking generally, therefore, there has been little change to note in the position. Summing up all over Canada, our remarks of last month can be repeated. Reports regarding remittances have been good throughout the month, and prospects seem to be encouraging.

In heavy dry goods business has been limited in its proportions as compared with last month, but up to the middle of November sorting-up orders were of a very satisfactory character. Travellers have commenced to start out with their samples of spring lines, but it is yet too early to speak of returns.

The fine weather that has prevailed during the fall has interfered with the actual demand for dress goods, but with a spell of cold weather dealers expect to see better trade.

Business in fancy goods and millinery during the latter part of October was not as good as some dealers would wish, the weather interfering with the movement in this line, as in the case of dress goods. Travellers for fancy goods and millinery expect to get out in the course of a week or so.

In underwear, knit goods and other similar lines of woollens, the warm weather has naturally prevented the demand from developing to its fullest dimensions. Dealers believe, however, that the goods are wanting, and that it only requires seasonable weather to induce a good demand.

The movement in cottons has been for small wants only, but agents of the various mills here claim to be booking good orders on spring account from jobbers. This is taken as an indication of a good business next summer, as the percentage, according to their statements, is larger than at the corresponding period last year. Owing to the combine, values on colored lines rule very firm, and as the production is limited, there is little prospect of any lower values. This fact is having a sympathetic effect on other lines of cottons.

In clothing the actual movement is small at the moment, as the fall demand is pretty well over. Houses here, however, report fair orders on spring account from their travellers in the Maritime Provinces and the Northwest. In the central provinces their men are not all out yet with complete spring lines, and it is too early to give an opinion of the prospects.

The advance in silks to which we referred last month has fully developed, the expectations for an advance all round being realized. We note an advance in broad goods last month, and the appreciation has extended to all lines of silk manufactured in Canada, the rise being equivalent to ten per cent. There is nothing in the advices to silk manufacturers here indicating any change abroad. All coincide regarding the firmness of the raw silk market.

The wool market has ruled steady here throughout the month, and the fact that several cargo lots of imported wool have been turned over may be taken as an indication that the woollen mills require supplies. In this connection a wool salesman who has just returned from a trip through Ontario and Quebec states that all the mills report plenty of orders.

BUYERS RETURNING.

Some of the buyers for our big houses have returned, but not all of them.

Mr. R. L. Gault, of Gault Bros., retutrned via the Vancouver on the 2nd of November.

Another passenger on the same steamer was Mr. Jos. Slessor, of Jas. Johnston & Co

Mr. John McLean, of John McLean & Co., only sailed for England a few weeks ago. He is expected back sometime during the first part of December.

Mr. J. Kissock, of Caverhill, Kissock & Binmore, is expected back by the close of the month. Mr. Kissock, it is understood, has been consulting some of the famous London occulists during his sojourn in England regarding his eyes.

Mr. Jno. Robertson, of Robertson, Linton & Co., is expected to sail for home in the course of a week or so.

Mr. Fisher, the buyer for the men's furnishing department of Wyld, Grasett & Darling, has just returned from a trip to Europe, and as a result of his visit there, the house is offering a number of desirable lines in neckwear especially suitable for the holiday trade.

Jos. Kellert, with the Montreal Waterproof Clothing Co., Montreal, was in the city this week showing a fine range of samples. He is one of those travellers who is known and liked by everybody, and his order book shows that he has not been loafing while in the city.