

of ability to sell what is asked for, and that your business is extended by satisfactorily selling all that the customer really needs.

NO. 9--BEING "BEHIND THE TIMES."

Lack of ambition is a misfortune to a dry goods dealer, but bear in mind that "slow and sure will win against speed and laziness." A dry goods merchant should have the best stand, the finest store and the most attractive shop windows in his city; his store should also be well lighted, warm and comfortably seated, and supplied with all the modern methods of facilitating business. If possible he should own the stand and building, but ought not to jeopardize the success of his business by shouldering a burden to gratify such a desire.

NO. 10.

Pitfall No. 10 is indicated by the absence of rules, or definite method, or systematic pursuit of business. Dry goods trade in all its branches can be reduced to method and order. Frame rules for the guidance of employees, and add to same as circumstances suggest. Recently the writer noticed in a large tramway office a blackboard, at the top of which was written: "Additional Orders for the Day." Not a bad idea. Make it tell.

NO. 11--NEGLECT OF CREDIT AND COMMERCIAL RATING.

Merchants should see to it and keep their credit A1 by meeting bills promptly and acting liberally with mercantile agencies. Never allow suspicion to remain on your financial standing. If in difficulty, a merchant should never give a chattel mortgage or preference; bankrupts tell us that, being forced to do so, they ever afterward regret it, asserting that failure began the day the bill of sale was signed. Keep the confidence of the wholesale trade and jealously guard your credit.

NO. 12--HOURS OF BUSINESS.

Keep the regular hours of business, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Open promptly and close on time. Talk business in business hours and see that your employees are alive to your interests.

Another pitfall which causes a great many failures is entering into the dry goods business without a knowledge of its requirements, or really without knowing the business. I believe this trade needs more hard study and longer apprenticeship than any other. I think a farmer with small capital would hardly succeed in a first-class dry goods business. Those who stand highest in the trade to-day, although benefiting by many years of the widest experience, have still to bend their best energies to the task and bring to bear upon it the accumulated experience of thousands of their fellows, and never lose the opportunity of appropriating from the remotest quarter any hint or pointer. Constant vigilance, study of the best dry goods reviews, and unflagging energy, with careful avoidance of the above pitfalls, should ensure a large measure of success.

Speculating in real estate has caused some of the most lamentable failures in the West, and should be religiously guarded against. It is impossible to be a retail dry goods merchant and a land speculator for long. All the realty needed is a comfortable dwelling, and, if it can be accomplished with prudence, the business stand.

False economy is another large pitfall which many otherwise successful merchants seem to be constantly falling into. The proper discussion of it, however, would require an essay in itself to do it justice, and I merely mention it and let your readers enlarge upon it at their leisure, after leaving with them the old

saw about "saving at the spigot and wasting at the bung." It is lost time and wasted energy to try to build up a successful business by niggardliness and parsimony in matters of detail when the main issue is being neglected.

Yours, etc.,

TACT, PUSH, AND PRINCIPLE.

WALTER H. LINDSAY, MILTON, ONT.-THIRD PRIZE ESSAY.

THE pitfalls of the dry goods trade! Alas, how numerous! Subscribers to the mercantile agencies have almost daily information of the unfortunates who have toppled over the brink into the abyss below, where many for ever lie prostrate, and from whence but few ever extricate themselves, able to pursue the journey of life with their former vim and confidence.

Some three years ago many of our trade periodicals, and some of our leading financiers, expressed their belief that business of every kind in Canada was, in the near future, certain to be in a more safe and healthful condition because so many inexperienced and insolvent traders had been weeded out; but these statements and forecasts have in nowise been justified, as the appallingly increasing rather than the lessened lists of insolvents weekly show. And it is a matter of the deepest regret, and the greatest concern to wholesale merchants as well as honest retail dry goods men, that the beacons which have been pointed to—as numerous as lighthouses on a rock-bound coast—and the warnings which are daily called out, have been unavailing in keeping so many apparently sensible and good business men from trading too near the edge, and finally meeting disaster.

The pitfalls of the retail trade are undoubtedly numerous; but some of these pitfalls are more alluring and extensive than others, and this is easily ascertained from the fact that the large majority of the fallen have tumbled over the same mistakes and errors.

Let us look briefly at a few of what may be considered the worst sort of pitfalls, and first, that of

CUTTING PRICES.

Among the most dangerous and deceptive of all the pitfalls in this fine young country of ours to-day, is this insidious and deplorable custom of cutting prices; and the sooner stern and drastic measures are enforced to stamp it out, the sooner will the assignment list cease to startle wholesale merchants on coming to their office of a morning. Any retail man in the habit of cutting prices, for any purpose whatever in view, who will sit down calmly, and figure out truthfully the total of his year's sales, and carefully deduct his items of expenditure, his rent, his salaries, insurance, taxes, heating and lighting, freight, advertising, shortages, loss from credit accounts, depreciation of stock, and get as near as possible to the amount for his numerous incidental expenses, will not wonder at stock-taking time if his balance indicates that he has not got any ahead, or rather that his indebtedness has increased. But the greatest trouble surrounding this pitfall is the persistency with which dealers, under the delusion that it "keeps their trade" or "increases their turnover" through outbait, permit bantering and beating down of prices, and generally depart from the sound principles that are contained in the one price only plan.

The writer will be pardoned for what may be considered by some a digression, but he has no hesitation in most emphatically recording his opinion that in the matter of cutting prices to the great injury of their own country customers, who are the