

usefulness. All wholesale traders are familiar with one or other of these business directories; and it is almost marvellous that a glance at the imposing list of traders in every small village in the Dominion there displayed has not long since made the shrewd and thoughtful among capitalists in trade sell out, while still they had capital, to seek a sphere of usefulness both for their enterprise and capital, either in some other country or in some other direction in this.

There are said to be twenty thousand traders, large and small, in the Dominion to a population of scarcely four millions; or one trader to every two hundred, of men, women and children. Allowing five to each household, this gives each trader the trade of forty families to support himself upon. It is doubtful if the average income of each household is above \$500; and certainly their average expenditure on food and clothing cannot exceed \$300. By far the larger portion of this is spent for the rudest necessities of life, which are largely a *direct* trade between farmer and consumer, in the country districts at least, and is never handled by the trader at all. Still, granting that there are not more than 10,000 of these traders engaged in dry goods, groceries, hardware, fancy goods, millinery, or general store keeping, it would be a liberal estimate to allow out of the eighty families' income \$100 per annum from each for these luxuries. This would yield a possible maximum annual turn-over of \$5,000 to each trader. Can there be much money in an average trade of this extent? In so far as there are large monopolists of trade in every trade-centre, this estimate must sink immensely in many cases. How can there be the possibility of anything but failure for very many? No wonder the competition for trade has been keen to agony, and profitless even when attained.

Voluntarily or involuntarily many must seek other outlets for their powers. Nor have they far to seek. There are vast tracts of land not farmed at all. There are still vaster tracts badly farmed. There is room for both capital and energy in farming. The Lower Provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are specially fitted by climate and situation for stock farming. Pasturage is rich and abundant; shipping facilities can be readily attained—it is no fault of Nature's if they are not; root crops of all sorts are specially successful there also. Only energy and capital are wanting to ensure large success. Yet that section is but sparsely peopled, and their young men so proverbially desert the land before manhood is fully upon them, to seek employment and advancement elsewhere, that these Provinces are viewed as "the happy hunting ground" of the matrimonially inclined. For the world has not yet attained that purity and chivalry which makes it easy and safe for the gentler sex to go out into other lands to seek employment and gratify a righteous—at least, if not a noble—ambition denied at home. Yet there is work enough for both men and maidens if the capital that is positively wasted on trade operations there and elsewhere were employed in the development of natural resources. These Provinces are perhaps the finest part of Canada—rich in soil, and minerals of all kinds. There is iron in great abundance; and simply because there is no compulsory demand from abroad for the raw ore or "pigs," are we to let this resource lie useless? A combination of capital, with ability and brains to work it, applied to the products of these mines, might make us manufacturers for a fourth part of the world, and vastly enrich by genuine skilful hand and brain labour the whole Provinces. Wooden shipbuilding is dead or dying. Why should we not build *iron* ships superior even to the celebrated Clyde-built vessels? We only want inventive talent, enterprise, perseverance and capital to do this. We have the natural resources. The *least* difficulty is the capital. It is that rarer power—skill and the practical application of it—which we lack.

Of course this is Utopian. Well, be it so. There is another Utopian scheme. If our conclusions be right as regards the superabundance of traders, might it not be possible for us to cure this evil voluntarily rather than by the suffering which involuntary liquidation always inflicts? Why should not the few undoubtedly strong wholesale firms buy up the assets of their weaker brethren, on condition that they shall go out of business for a stated time. Several, perhaps even many, would gladly cease the warfare if they could be *honestly* relieved of debt and retain only a moiety of what they still *show* as capital. Retail traders might follow the example set. Then the capital so *retained*, saved from being squandered in a vain and hopeless competition, might either separately or by voluntary combination be employed in farming, or mining and the manufacture of the products of the mine, as already hinted at.

Such a course will come, is coming, *involuntarily*, if not of free choice. But if men would but see it, look facts rationally in the face, which there are indications at present they incline to do, and plan out to themselves a life of *usefulness* to the nation as a whole from the will to serve and not to hinder progress, this magnificent territory of ours will enter on a glorious and long-continued era of prosperity.

This result we have been trying to bring about by a "National Protective Policy" of sheer selfishness and isolation, extremely feebly carried out. It is in vain to halt between two opinions. Eighty per cent. duty on all manufactured goods would *force* us to manufacture for our local needs. Nothing less

will. These needs, however, would only increase in so far as we developed our natural resources in grain, lumber or minerals and fostered immigration of the productive classes. The present "protection" afforded is utterly futile, and makes us the laughing-stock of other nations.

The truth is we need no protection except from our own folly or listlessness. We should scorn as much to ask it against the American or British manufacturer, as one manufacturer here would to ask it against a neighbour manufacturer. The sickly sentiment of "Argus" in his criticism of the Hon. Ed. Blake's speech crops out in his illustration of the poor crushed Canadian hardware manufacturer whom a degenerate American has persecuted into lowering his price from \$5 to \$2.50. This is childishness. Is it not a fact that competition between rivals *within* a country is constantly productive of like results? Is Government, therefore, to step in to regulate the prices of all commodities, and give to every one a monopoly of his special trade that the monopolist may benefit at the expense of the consumer? Surely this is folly. Is the folly any less when each nation tries to monopolize its own trade and struggles to legislate (as though the thing were *possible*) against all competition of nation with nation in usefulness and perfection of manufacture?

But, Canada is not wholly a nation of self-seekers. There is true grit, true courage in many of her sons who are not so childish—so unmanly—as to fear competition from any source or any nation. Confident in her own strength—that strength and capacity which God has given her—to do honest labour so well directed that it shall be second in usefulness and beauty to none, she knows that she can only perfect such work, not in the calm and stagnant atmosphere of a forcing-frame, but amid the storm and tempest, as well as the sunshine, side by side with the "tares" of reckless and useless competition till the harvest comes, when her growth and strength have ultimated themselves in full fruition. Till then we must let the tares and the wheat grow together, nor attempt to do evil that good may come—to become more and more selfish that when we have got all we can to ourselves we may be able to compete *generously* with others. No *real* wealth can be so attained—no real strength so developed. It is always as fictitious as the glittering soap-bubble of childhood days, which a breath created and a breath dissolves again. Let us rather "put away childish things," and be *men*.

*Spero.*

#### FOREST DESTRUCTION.

A timely and forcible article in the August number of the *Canadian Monthly*, from the pen of P. S. H., Halifax, on the subject of Forest Destruction, will be read with much appreciation by all who have their eyes in any degree open to the danger to which the prosperity of our country is exposed from this cause. It is time that public opinion generally were more alive to it; for although much harm has been already done, much may yet be averted by timely and vigorous action, and by the pressure of all the influence which an enlightened public opinion can bring to bear upon it.

A shrewd European writer truly says that the "universal curse of an old civilization is the reckless destruction of the original forests." Ours is not yet an old civilization, yet the mischief which has already been done in this way is not easily calculable. Noble timber, one of the priceless ornaments of a landscape, destroyed beyond possibility of replacement,—valuable property utterly wasted, and a climate in some places already deteriorated,—are now the unwelcome accompaniment of a still *new* civilization. But an intelligent nation like ours must not let the havoc go on with open eyes; it must spare no pains to check the progress of this most injurious destruction.

The writer of the article referred to analyzes the various causes which have contributed to the demolition of so much of our "forest primeval." The first settlers, absorbed in the one idea of "clearing" their land, looked upon all trees as their natural enemies, and cut down unsparingly, leaving to their descendants the task of trying to retrieve the destruction to some extent by laboriously planting young trees for shade and ornament to replace the stately old forest monarchs which might far better have been left where it was not necessary for agricultural operations to remove them. Not only did the settlers clear their ground with the axe, however. Fire was used with still more disastrous effect, and we can all recall recollections of country roads through dreary wastes of burnt forests thus wantonly destroyed, leaving, of all their stately beauty, only charred stumps and here and there a dismal black skeleton to sadden and depress any sensitive imagination. Far from making the "wilderness to blossom as the rose," these early settlers, by what we cannot but call their reckless folly, have left to future generations a parched and barren wilderness where they found all the exuberant verdure and fertility of virgin nature. For even where the land was really *cleared*, and not left a confusion of blackened stumps and branches, this process of *burning* off the timber, and so calcining the surface-soil itself, ruins the permanent fertility of the land, though the stimulus of the ashes may increase it for the first two or three years. When these were past, the burning-over process was again resorted to in order to "clear" new land, and by this wasteful means whole tracts of our valuable forest-land have been recklessly spoiled of what might have been a source of national wealth for ages to come.