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TALES OF THE TOWN.

*"I must have liberty
Withal, as large a charter as the wind
To blow on whom I please."*

THE holiday season is now fairly on, and the shipments of merchandise, I am informed by a wholesale merchant, go to show that the holiday business is confined to no one class of merchants, and that no line of trade has any marked advantage over any other line in meeting the demand of the public for Christmas goods. The same gentleman says that this fact proves beyond doubt that the giving of presents in the holiday season is on the increase, and that the Christmas trade is becoming a source of large profit to every dealer in the country.

The goods that are generally sold for presents are such as admit of good profit, and the net income of many Victoria merchants for December is greater than for any other two months of the year. The importance of this feature of trade is well appreciated by dealers generally, as is seen in the attention they give to it. There is no store so insignificant but that it has not its holiday counter, and even on the most obscure streets, some of the show windows, which are given up eleven months in the year to flies and a few jars of stick candy, are now resplendent with toys suitable for the Christmas season. And here let me say, I observe that notwithstanding the growing tendency to give useful presents, there is no falling off in the demand for toys, and the jobbers in notions and novelties all report that the volume of the business this year is equal to any year in the past.

A remarkable feature of the holiday demand is the adroitness and skill with which it is cultivated and stimulated by the big dealers in the cities. It has been only within the past few years that the dealers have expanded the demand to its present enormous volume. In fact it was customary a few years ago to confine shopping expeditions during the holidays to the week preceding Christmas. But it became apparent to the dealers that one week allowed of too small a sale of holiday goods, hence seasonable articles began to be displayed at an earlier date every year until now, when the holiday season of the big stores literally extends over a good part of the month of November as well as the entire month of December. It is not what the public wants, but what suits the retail dealers that governs the extent and duration of the holiday trade, and if it should pay the storekeeper to sell holiday goods during the summer months, it may be taken for granted that they

would make the attempt, and the public dutifully follow in the path chalked out for it. As to the descriptions of goods which are considered suitable for presents at Christmas, the decision rests entirely with the dealers. If slow-moving staples require to be worked off, some merchants evidently believe that the holiday season is the time for the process, and duly labeled and decorated they pass into consumption in the shape of holiday goods, and perhaps at an enhanced price.

It is the custom in eastern cities to give the manager of the leading theatre a benefit at least once a year. The Vancouver people, I observe, tendered Manager Goldsmid a most successful benefit, and now the Victoria friends of Manager Cort propose to give that gentleman a benefit. A programme is now in course of preparation, and I am told that it will surpass anything of the description ever seen on the coast. The evening's entertainment will consist of vocal and instrumental music, etc., etc. The date has not yet been decided upon, but it will probably occur about Dec. 26.

An amusing story is told of a prominent legal light in this city who spent considerable time at Shawnigan Lake last summer. This gentleman was very fond of dancing, and at a party given out there was particularly devoted as a ball room gallant to a very worthy and attractive lady from Nanaimo. One excruciatingly warm evening when a hop was in progress he met this lady in the ball room and asked her for the honor of a waltz. She politely accepted and in a few moments they were whirling around the rooms to the seductive strains of one of Strauss' most entrancing melodies. But nature asserted herself and the perspiration was profuse. Finally the dance came to a finish, and breathless and panting, our legal friend pulled out a large handkerchief and mopping his face and drying his neck in a rather conspicuous manner, said, "Whe-ew, I'm sweatin' like a horse. How are you?" It is needless to say that the lady was somewhat startled at the remark and the question, and excusing herself as soon as possible, left the room and was not seen any more on the floor.

I have a word or two to say about elevators this week, and as the number of elevators in buildings in Victoria is limited, my audience, so far as owners go, will be necessarily small. But that fact will be compensated for in the vast numbers who find it necessary to use elevators. It is patent that Victoria is unique in the history of cities. Things are done here for which there would be some one held

criminally responsible elsewhere. Here is a case in point, and the circumstances are related just as I heard them: It is just a fortnight and one day since a certain lady came into town do some shopping, and among the stores she visited was one on Government street. Finding it necessary to visit the upper storeys of the building in the course of her purchases, she sought the elevator as a quicker and easier means of transit. No one was on hand to manage the machine and she made enquiries of one of the young ladies who directed her to one of the proprietors. That gentleman shipped Mrs. B., as I will call the lady, in the elevator like a parcel of goods, pulled the rope and sent the compartment skywards. On reaching the top, the door on the landing was found to have got caught, opening only a very little distance—a matter of eight or ten inches. While the passenger was endeavoring in conjunction with one of the young ladies to push the door back sufficiently to effect an exit from the machine, some one below pulled the rope, and the elevator commenced its descent. Mrs. B. had one foot out on the floor of the building and was in a fair way of being jammed in between the elevator and the floor, but, with commendable presence of mind, the young lady pushed her back into the carriage, the top of which struck her on the head at the same time and expedited the fall. The unfortunate lady had no time to think; she was thrown down dazed, and appeared before the horror stricken cause of the accident below. Being of a highly nervous and energetic temperament, her hurts were unnoticed for the moment; she was taken to the Victoria Hotel, had only arrived there when she collapsed, and it has since been a neck and neck race between her and the grim monster whom none of us cares to meet under the best circumstances. Thanks to a good constitution, careful nursing and the splendid treatment of the genial "Dr. Jim," she is now fairly well on the way to recovery, although a couple or three relapses have been terribly critical. She is scarcely yet out of danger, and has suffered a complication of injuries the actual extent of which are not yet known.

Now these are the simple facts of an accident that occurred just a fortnight ago, and which were suppressed in both the daily papers. That I have reason to know. These great political organs that swell themselves out like the toad and prate so loudly of the independence of the press; that shower abuse on public men, whose only fault is that they have ability sufficient to become public; these great public educators that preach to each other most edifyingly about honesty, honor, truth, manliness and fearlessness, are