

### SHORT LENGTHS.

It is the little things of life that worry. Just now a practice has grown up in some of the wholesale houses, caused perhaps by a too great inclination to please their customers, which is now bringing trouble upon the houses which inaugurated the custom. Most wholesale houses will, in certain goods, cut dress lengths from their dress goods pieces to oblige their customers. This is allowable in silk and tweeds goods and perhaps in goods which are worth above fifty cents a yard. At least, if the cutting was confined to dress goods above this price, there would be less room for grumbling, but it is difficult to see why this should be indulged in with regard to goods less than one dollar per yard.

But the practice has grown so, and with accumulating strength forced itself on the wholesale houses until a ridiculous custom is in vogue in a few of them of cutting dress lengths from goods at fifteen, twenty, and twenty-five cents per yard. The custom seems to have begun by travellers selling dress lengths to milliners and general dealers for their own consumption. Finally it has forced itself among a certain class of customers with small stocks and large ambitions. When the question is considered, we can come to but one conclusion, that is that anyone who cannot handle a piece of dress goods with thirty to thirty-six yards in it at a price less than fifty cents or one dollar had better not be in business. And no wholesale house has a right to sell less than this, because they are doing injury to their best customers who do buy full lengths.

When the working of this custom with regard to the wholesale house is considered, the coarseness of the practice is seen. The traveller has a sample of a piece of dress goods which contains thirty-five yards, and he sells to each of five persons seven yards of this material. But in the cutting a half yard has been lost, and only six and a half yards are left, which are sold at a sacrifice, and a half yard is lost, which is a great deal when goods are sold at a close margin. Again, the matter is worse when the piece contains thirty yards, three lengths are sold and nine yards are left, and when the next order comes in for seven yards, the question arises, what is to be done with the extra two yards. Cut it off and it is lost. Send it to the customer and he will take it if it is a bonus, if not he cuts off his seven yards and sends the two back. Thus the houses lose very heavily by their cutting business. And who gains? No one, but a few small dealers, who do not deserve it. The genuine dry goods merchants would never want such a favor in any line of dress goods less than fifty cents in price.

But there is another phase to this question in which the interests of the retailer are more concerned. Some dealers in Canada and in the United States are contending for shorter dress lengths—that is, that no piece of dress goods should contain over twenty-five to thirty-five yards. At present the Dominion Cotton Mills Co.'s goods are put up in pieces of from thirty-nine to forty-four yards in length, while in cheaper goods from American and English houses the lengths run from fifty to seventy yards each. This is too much for the ordinary retailer, and we see a great deal of benefit

which would result to the retailer by having shorter lengths in dress goods and being enabled to carry more of the variety that the house with which he deals has in stock. He would commence the season with a greater variety and his repeat orders would be more numerous and greater in volume.

The volume of the sales by the wholesale houses and manufacturers would be increased rather than diminished, and the only sufferer would be the wholesale house, which would have considerable more labor on its hands. But just here what has been said on a previous point comes in, and it must be recognized that if shorter dress lengths were introduced by manufacturers and jobbers, the house would gain by having to do less cutting into dress lengths. The decision of both these questions rests with the wholesalers, but their decisions must necessarily be modified by the expressed opinion of the retail dry goods merchants who stand in the relation of customers to them.

### A DEPARTMENTAL RULING.

As there appears to be a difference of opinion as to the proper rating of what are commonly known as "dress goods," in order to secure uniformity at all ports, in future, collectors are authorized that this class of goods may be rated under Item No. 216 of the tariff, without regard to width of the goods, when costing twenty cents or less per yard. Care, however, must be taken that no flannels, serges or cloths, other than "ladies' dress goods," are entered under said Item No. 216. This will have the effect of letting in meltons up to ten pence a yard at the low duty, thus decreasing the price of these goods. It also removes some doubts and secures a uniformity which was very much needed in classing certain kinds of dress goods.

### AN ADVANCE IN CELLULOID.

An advance in celluloid collars and cuffs, amounting to 11c. per dozen on collars and 22c. per dozen cuffs, has taken place in New York. This advance is on the built collars in the manufacture of which there is only one company in America. This company controls the manufacture of the genuine celluloid collar which is made of three thicknesses, the outer two being pure celluloid and the central one linen or cotton. Ever since its introduction this collar has had a strong hold on the market and has had a wide and enormous sale. It is undoubtedly the best celluloid collar on the market, but the monopoly has kept up the price. It has been extensively sold in Canada, especially during the summer months. We have manufacturers in Canada who make Ivorine and rubberine collars and cuffs, but these goods are made from raw material imported from Scotland and England, and are made of but a single thickness. They are not built goods like the celluloid wares. Mr. A. B. Mitchell, 16 Sheppard street, Toronto, is very extensively engaged in the manufacture of these rubberine goods, and his wares have a strong sale in Canada, but they form

a class quite different to the regular celluloid collar and cuff manufactured by the American company. The rubberine goods are neatly made of one thickness of the celluloid and with an extra thickness around the button-holes, but with no intervening layer of cotton. This advance in New York prices will create advance here, and dealers should remember that they cannot replenish their stocks at the old price and govern themselves accordingly.

### TIPS ON WOLLEN GOODS.

Good all-wool blankets are worth 45c. at the wholesale house, and good unions are worth 40c. Cheaper grades are being sold, but they are dearer in comparison with the goods sold at the above prices.

The trade during the past month has placed very heavy orders for woollen underwear, and now the mills' books are full and orders are being refused. The July deliveries in some cases are behind, and this shows a coming scarcity of woollens. Prices are low and the demand has increased, especially in the Northwest, and about Oct. 1st woollen underwear will not be plentiful. There may be enough, but there will certainly be no superabundance. There is a probability also that medium class grey flannels may be scarce. Recently one mill at Peterboro' was burned down, and the Lambton mills have been closed up on account of the keen competition. This has lessened the supply of this class of flannels, and it will tend to stiffen prices at least.

Efforts are being made to spot the cutting by certain wholesale houses in both Montreal and Toronto which have displayed a manufacturer's invoice and offered to sell at a small commission of two and a half to five per cent. This, of course, cannot be done at a profit, as it costs more to sell the goods and is only resorted to by financially weak firms.

### ADVANCE IN SILK.

This week news was received from Switzerland that an advance of from 10 to 15 per cent. had taken place in raw silk. This may be so, but it is not likely. Nevertheless there are circumstances which point to an advance in the near future, although the advance has not been sufficiently confirmed, as yet, to indicate certainty. In the cocoon markets of France and Italy there has been an upward movement of prices ever since about June 25th. Early reports from Japan announced an increase in the crop of raw silk this season, but later reports say that Japan will supply no more of the world's demands than it did last year. The Italian crop will show a deficit of from 20 to 25 per cent. These circumstances show that the present upward movement in Japan and Lyons will probably be maintained. Even if the advance amounts to 15 per cent., as reported, it will not affect the goods already ordered by Canadian jobbers and importers, and the effect will not be felt very much until orders are placed for spring silks. The immediate effect will be to make prices firm, but the advance here will not be noticeable.