



A HALIFAX LETTER.

Sir,—You asked for an occasional letter from Halifax giving some idea of trade in the maritime provinces. Things are decidedly dull here at present anyhow. We are deluged with commercial representatives of the books and stationery houses from Canada, the States and England. In one week we received representatives of the following British houses:—Marcus Ward & Co., William Collins Sons & Co., John Walker & Co., and Eyre & Spottiswoode, besides other American and Canadian houses. I was told that thirteen books and stationery men were at Halifax hotels in one week. It is hard to refuse them all, but the local trade is certainly buying light this year.

The book men are doing us up just now. Lately we have met Mr. Knight of Ward, Lock & Co., Mr. Day of Longman's they keep at us day and night—and others. Halifax merchants certainly do not get much chance to order from lists or catalogues, as we can inspect samples almost any time in almost any line.

A few of the stores have started the early closing movement, on Saturdays closing at one o'clock. But the majority of the book and stationery dealers will not give up the fun of waiting for customers these beautiful Saturday afternoons.

We expect some revival of business when the summer tourists begin their annual trips to our country. Our Yankee cousins are glad of the chance to buy cheap reprints of American copyright books here at 30c. to the shilling. By the way, now that the English publishers have advanced prices of most of their lines of books, do you not think it is time Halifax dealers should advance their retail prices to 35c. to the shilling? I understand that only one house here blocks the way. I believe this is the only city in Canada where the 35 cent rate to the shilling does not prevail.

The June number of Books and Notions was a very interesting one. Although many of the questions discussed do not concern us, it is always of interest to us to hear of them and know what is going on. Trade chat, copyright lists, advertisements, etc., are always read with interest.

We are glad to know from your article on "The State of Trade" that prospects are becoming brighter. It will reach us here in time.

Yours, etc.,
BLUENOSE.

PRACTICAL THOUGHTS.

Sir, I have read with interest your recent articles on "Canvassing for trade by Retailers." It does seem that there is a revolution at hand and new methods of selling must be adopted by retailers or many failures must follow. Every town, hamlet and township has its army of agents canvassing for

every imaginable thing almost. Customers who formerly bought many books and other goods sold by the book and fancy goods dealers are called on by agents who by glibness and persistency succeed in getting orders for books and goods that take the people's ready cash so that many who have real need for goods that every bookseller carries a stock of, find that the cash with which they expected to buy at the store, must be handed over to the agent for goods ordered but not really wanted or needed. Merchants are either passed by or are asked to charge goods that should be cash, or people do without what is really necessary, all because the agents have captured the cash. To many merchants this agency business is a real difficulty, and what is to be done is the question. Trade cannot be conducted on the principle of waiting for customers in these go-ahead days. Ways and means of attracting cash customers to purchase at the store must be adopted, or canvassing for trade soon becomes a necessity in order to avoid failure. In my opinion it is much better by politeness, attention to details and prices and arrangement of stock to make your stores attractive to customers that you can secure sufficient trade to keep on the up grade without going into the agency or canvassing business. To many canvassing outside of the town for anything is most distasteful and causes them to feel as though they had lowered themselves in the eyes of their citizens by so doing. There is no disgrace in it, however, and, in a great many places, it has come to this "canvass or go to the wall." Pride will have to be swallowed and the difficult work entered upon to keep floating, and it is better to float than sink. Personally, I have not had much experience in the canvassing line, but it has been tried sufficiently to satisfy me that if worked systematically that it will be an important means of indirect profit to retailers adopting the system more or less as the town they do business in is afflicted by canvassers from other places. I am inclined to think that the only way to gain control of trade now monopolized by agents is to canvass your town and neighborhood thoroughly cutting below agents' prices for lines that you hear agents are at work on in your town. By so doing agents will tire of work in your town and leave it for yourself. It requires lots of grit to canvass at home where you are known. It is much easier to take orders from strangers than your own townspeople. They will very often put you off and say they will decide and let you know at the store. This they seldom do, but you accomplish your object in keeping them from buying from outside agents what they could do very well without, and when they have real needs they will go to the store for them. Usually sufficient can be sold to repay you for the efforts made, but I don't think that in the smaller towns that anyone will make a direct profit by canvassing, but if the effect of a little united effort results in the great army of outside agents being lessened in the community, the gain will be felt in that way.

Yours,
A WESTERN BOOKSELLER.

WALL PAPER.

The American wall-paper factories are drawing closer into the combine. Some are still holding off. The latest to join is the Manhattan Wall-paper Co., of New York, and there are at present at least twenty-four factories which have signified their willingness to enter the huge trust. Seventeen of these have already been appraised, but the appraisals will not all be completed before the middle of July. Then if no complications arise, about Aug. 15th, samples and prices will be ready and the trade will then know whether the combine is a benefit or not. No doubt it will benefit the factories, but whether they will be content with the benefit of fewer patterns to be made and less competition, or will strive for higher prices and greater profits, remains to be seen.

This is of great moment to Canadian dealers. It is a well-known fact that such papers as glits, which cost now about fifteen cents a roll, cost under the old combine forty to forty-five cents. If prices rise, and they undoubtedly will, more or less, present stocks are valuable and dealers should take advantage of this probability and conserve their present stocks of American papers, as it will be impossible to replace them with papers of as good quality at an equal price. The shrewd dealer can take advantage of this by raising the prices of his papers early in the fall. This, of course, will need care, as a too great rise over competitors will injure trade, but nevertheless the point should be kept constantly in mind and as much made of it as possible.

The past season has seen corners and extensions relegated to the back seat in the tastes of the fashionable world. They have seen their day and the public has done with them. Dealers who have a stock are getting rid of them as fast as possible. The coming season will see an advance in public favor of the side-wall, border and ceiling to match. This makes a very pretty combination and is easy to sell, as only one choice is necessary instead of two or three.

Canadian papers are improving in point of quality and beauty of design. Most of the Canadian houses report an extra large volume of orders for fall delivery. The patterns are numerous, and if prices of American papers rise in August, the Canadian wall-paper manufacturers will be afforded an opportunity of raising the excellence of their work and of commanding higher prices, while at the same time gaining a greater share of the trade which belongs rightly to them. But until this improvement is made, a large amount of American wall-paper will continue to be sold.

J. F. M. McFarlane, late of McFarlane, McKinley & Co., has formed a joint stock company with a capital of \$100,000, for the manufacture of window shades, curtain poles and brass goods. A large brick factory is in course of erection in Toronto and by July the firm will be manufacturing. The McFarlane Shade Co. will undoubtedly receive a share of the Canadian trade.