

no misapprehension as to what would happen if retail trade were left entirely to the Chinese. They have had experience of "rings" before and do not need to be reminded of the necessity for foreign stores to stabilize prices. The cost of coal is a case in point. It cost no more to mine and little more to carry to the consumer during the war than it does now, yet the prices went up two and three hundred per cent. No doubt if Kailan coal was raised from \$13 to \$30 a ton we should be paying a like increase for all other grades of coal.

It ill becomes "Puzzled" or any other foreigner here who knows local conditions to rush into print because they have to pay 50 cents more for a patent razor strop or a dollar more for a pair of patent leather shoes at a foreign store.

I am etc.,

Shanghai, Mar. 8, 1924.

To the Editor of the

"NORTH-CHINA DAILY NEWS."

SIR,—Your correspondent "Puzzled" would be less puzzled if he made a wider survey of prices at foreign and Chinese stores in Shanghai. The citation of a single case, and that of an article as rare as a blue tiger (some sort of patent razor strop), proves nothing at all. It may be news to your correspondent that the patent of a famous razor ran out fairly recently, and that he is possibly comparing the price of new and cheaper stock with the original article.

I note, by the way, that you advertised in your paper only the day before, a razor, blades and case for \$1.20 at Weeks. Why buy a strop?

There are a great many things—Japanese hats and cutlery, Chinese shoes, shirts, soap, scented cigars, that once used will never be forgotten. Many of these commodities would be cheap at double the price if purchased at a foreign store that confined itself exclusively to imported instead of local products. A known brand of whisky, or butter, or cod-liver oil costs just about the same at a foreign as at a Chinese store—providing it has not been purchased by the native retailer as damaged cargo at an auction.

The writer is not interested, even indirectly, in any foreign store, but is puzzled to know why, if they make the huge profits suggested by your correspondent, they do not pay correspondingly huge dividends, or princely salaries to their staffs.

There is just the possibility, however, that they conduct their businesses honestly; that they do not take advantage of Laocman passers-by to charge in gold dollars what they usually charge in Mex.; and that they can be depended upon to sell goods that can be eaten or worn or used with confidence. It will be noted that no comparison has been made between the civility, attention and advice that the casual buyer receives at either of the sources mentioned—native and foreign. To some this may be of no value; but there are others who appreciate it.

Old residents here are under