

1893 THE CENTURY'S PROGRESS – YORKSHIRE

GEORGE THORPE & CO., GENERAL DRAPERS, SILK MERCERS, AND COMPLETE HOUSE FURNISHERS,
IVEGATE, NEW TYRREL STREET, AND HUSTLERGATE, BRADFORD.

TAILORING BRANCH: 52, NEW MARKET STREET, BRADFORD.



GEORGE THORPE & Co., BRADFORD.

As in other English towns and cities of the first rank, there have been developed in Bradford numerous large and important drapery and furnishing businesses, and among the most notable of these stands the immense concern carried on by the firm of Messrs. George Thorpe & Co. founded upwards of half a century ago. This prominent house has had a highly successful career, and has built up a trade of a far more than ordinary magnitude. Capable management and judicious enterprise have conducted to steady development and expansion of the business in all its departments, and at the present time Messrs. George Thorpe & Co. take a leading position in their trade in Bradford, and occupy one of the finest and most imposing commercial edifices in the town. This notable warehouse, rising to a height of five storeys, stands at the corner of Ivegata and New Tyrrel Street, where in each of the thoroughfares named we find an entrance to the retail drapery. The block extends to Hustlergate, where the Wholesale entrance is, and a little further round in Hustlergate, closely adjoining the workers' entrance, is a large and convenient goods entrance and parcels despatch department. Admirably organised and most conveniently planned throughout, Messrs. Thorpe's huge establishment possesses every facility and accommodation desirable in a business of this kind. The retail departments have their attractive frontages on Ivegata and New Tyrrel Street, while the extensive Wholesale branch is at the Tyrrel Street and Hustlergate end of the premises, and occupies the whole of the upper storeys.

Complete as the premises appear to us, Messrs. Thorpe have detected certain possibilities of improvement, considered necessary for the further development and requirements of their increasing

business, and with characteristic enterprise have rebuilt that part of their property devoted exclusively to the house-furnishing business, and have also effected extensive alterations in the retail drapery section, notably the erection of a powerful passenger elevator, built on the most approved principles, to convey their customers to all floors, and save the fatigue of stair-climbing. Messrs. Thorpe have always been in the van of enterprise in adapting the most modern inventions, not only for the benefit of their customers but also for the comfort of their assistants, as may be well illustrated by the fact that here the American cash railway system has been now in full operation for several years, taking cash to and from all parts of the house (even two floors up) to one large central office on the ground floor. This firm was also among the first (now ten or twelve years ago) to recognise the superiority of the electric light, and adopt it throughout their premises; this they did by manufacturing it themselves, until the Corporation undertook it on a large scale for the town's supply. The installation required by Messrs. Thorpe numbers sixty or so large arc lamps, and a few incandescent for office use. The departments on the ground floor are British and foreign dress goods, British and foreign silks, furs of the best quality, gloves and umbrellas, ribbons and laces, English and French flowers, trimmings and small wares, ladies' and gentlemen's hosiery, travelling bags and trunks, and a comprehensive household linen department.

On the first floor or show-room we find on the left a splendidly appointed mantle and costume department, making a fine display of the latest creations of everything handsome and fashionable. Adjoining is the millinery department, showily dressed out with many stylish and becoming novelties manufactured on the premises, and which we consider displayed much taste and ability on the part of the firm's accomplished modistes; next comes the ladies' underclothing and children's outfitting department, and opposite is the ladies' and gentlemen's boot and shoe salon, with separate apartments. Proceeding to the second floor we find a large and commodious gentlemen's ready-made and bespoke clothing department, splendidly arranged and fitted with every convenience and privacy for cutting out, fitting on, and the transaction of a large and prosperous business. This is one of Messrs. Thorpe's latest additions, having only lately been opened, but from the style with which this large room is fitted up, and the magnificent selection of high-class goods placed at the disposal of the public — very noticeable being many smart patterns which we admired in fancy worsteds, West of England, Scotch and Cheviot tweeds, together with a complete range of ready-mades in all sizes — we have little hesitation in predicting it soon to be one of Messrs. Thorpe's largest departments. The floor immediately above is devoted essentially to the Wholesale and contains several departments. Immediately above, on the top floor of all, of this portion of the building, we discover a large suite of workrooms splendidly lighted and ventilated. These are used respectively for the manufacture of costumes, mantles, millinery, underclothing, carpets, and upholstery, each being presided over by a capable and experienced manageress. Retracing our steps, we return to the ground floor by the passenger elevator, which accomplishes the eighty feet or more journey in a few seconds. Next, we proceed by underground passage — for we are now on the basement, to the newly erected furnishing branch, with frontage to Ivegata, and in close proximity to retail drapery, being connected on each floor by large doors. The basement is mainly set apart for reserve stock, but we notice a specially convenient arrangement for the packing and unpacking of furniture, beside another powerful elevator by which means the furniture can be quickly transported to or from any portion of the large building, at a minimum of trouble.

On the ground floor is the main entrance from Ivegata. Messrs. Thorpe have certainly spared no expense in fitting up an imposing array of windows round this fine new building, showing many handsome suites and cabinets to good advantage. This floor is stocked with a multitudinous variety of smallware furnishings for useful and ornamental purposes, the prominent departments being ironmongery, with a complete range of culinary and domestic utensils, pottery both useful and highly

artistic; dinner sets and tea sets at what seem to us exceedingly moderate prices; and a large variety of more ornamental wares from the far distant potteries of China and Japan, and many other artistic specimens of the gifted Japanese craftsmen. Ascending to the next floor we here find the carpet department, in which the firm show choice products of the British and foreign looms in Brussels, Wiltons, royal Axminsters, Kidderminster, and tapestry carpets, Scotch and Kensington art squares, hearthrugs, linoleums and oilcloths from six to eight yards wide. Here also is the curtain department, with a fine selection of Nottingham, Swiss, guipure, tapestry, and other makes, blankets and eiderdown-quilts of the best makes, blinds, &c. The second floor is exclusively furniture, dining-room and drawing-room suites, beautifully upholstered, and many cabinets of a high-class order.

Still higher, on the third floor, we find devoted exclusively to complete bedroom furnishing, bedroom suites in many designs and in all woods, mattresses and bedding of every possible kind and quality, and bedsteads and children's cots in all sizes, from the plain to the highly finished, all brass. This is one of the most complete departments for complete bedroom furnishing we have yet seen. On the top floor of all we find another fine set of rooms, occupied by busy cabinet-makers and French polishers, in close touch with the elevator, by which means finished goods are easily removed to any portion of the building. The whole of the furniture stock is kept in the six storeys of these Ivegate premises and is in its entirety a splendid collection of cabinet ware and upholstery, the variety of which is sufficiently large to satisfy every requirement as to price and quality. It would be difficult to name any article of furniture for castle or for cottage that is not creditably represented in this vast stock. And even in the cheapest lines of goods we note that Messrs. George Thorpe & Co. carefully, adhere to their well-tryed policy of supplying only reliable articles of sound workmanship and excellent finish. Equally high praise is due to Messrs. Thorpe's stocks in every other department to which we have referred. The goods in each case have been selected with conspicuous skill and judgment in the best markets of the world, and a more exhaustive variety or a better range suitable for all classes of customers could not be found in London itself.

The Wholesale branch (the firm trades under the style of Thorpe Brothers & Co.) does a very important trade, and is specially appointed for its purpose, and has a number of spacious showrooms splendidly lighted, one of these for fancy goods being no less than sixty-eight feet square. Both in the wholesale and retail divisions the various departments are managed by experienced buyers, and the stocks are kept in a state of perfect order and completeness, every novelty being added with the utmost promptitude. The firm employ a large and efficient staff of assistants and have also in their service a number of skilled and experienced dressmakers, modistes, mantle-makers, &c., &c., who are accommodated in comfortable work-rooms on the premises as already mentioned, and whose productions have a reputation for artistic design, good taste, and excellent finish. Altogether this firm's business must be classed as one of the leading concerns of its kind in the Bradford district, and under the able management of the sole proprietor, Mr. George Thorpe (a gentleman widely known and much respected in the neighbourhood), it bids fair to continue in the full enjoyment of that progressive prosperity which has characterised it from the first.