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& GENERAL STOREKEEPER

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Chemical experiments in the Government laboratory at Ottawa have nipped in the bud a new source of demand for sugar. Some of the brewers of the country had been led to use sugar instead of malt, on account of the remission of the duty on the former and the increase of the duty on the latter above a year ago. But specimens of the beer proved to be tell-tale under the strong scientific search-light thrown upon it in the laboratory, and now every brewer using sugar must, on peril of the seizure of his works, enter on his books the quantity used, and pay the excise of 10c. a gallon on malted liquor made in whole or in part from any other substance than malt. This is worse than paying a customs duty of 15c. a bushel on the malt, and the consumption of sugar in breweries is apt to prove short-lived.

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The disuse of barrels by the Sugar Trust of the United States may possibly be the beginning of the end, and bags may eventually displace barrels everywhere as sugar-packages. Economy is supposed to be the motive of the substitution in the Trust's re-

fineries, and economy is the supreme consideration in commerce nowadays. It may be that the barrel makers were getting their industry into the same consolidated shape as the Trust has brought sugar refining into, and that this strong position has determined the change in favor of bags. But the comparative cost of bags and barrels does not represent the whole question between them. The bag may be the cheaper and yet be the less economical package. If it costs less and requires no more labor in the handling, and affords equally good protection to its contents, the argument is certainly in its favor, and it should be adopted. It certainly has superior claims over the barrel on the ground of freight, as the latter packages in a carload of sugar will represent a greater proportion of the cost of carriage than the former. Further, the space gained by the use of bags gives them the preference. But the structure of the barrel is convenient for the greater part of the handling necessary in the movement of sugar. It can be rolled over levels, while the bag will have to be carried or dragged by the porter. Then the barrel keeps out the rain, moisture and dust, and is probably less liable to damage in transit, and will probably hold its contents on the average better than the bag. For the handling and keeping of various other classes of merchandise, such as flour, meal, salt, apples, etc., the barrel is clearly the better package, and unless the raw material of bags is very cheap, it would seem that barrels should have the preference. It is said that the use of bags by the Trust is very unsatisfactory to the grocers of the United States, who object chiefly on the ground of loss through evaporation, damage through moisture and awkwardness for handling.

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We are now close enough to Christmas to think about it. The grocer has not more than enough time left before buying to scan

the range of this patronage, and on the basis of that survey figure out the extent and character of the supplies he should lay in against the local Christmas demand. If people do not have a good Christmas dinner there is usually but one reason, and that is that they cannot afford it. Many other luxuries and special enjoyments may be dispensed with on various grounds, but there is no variety in the grounds on which people leave out the extras in their Christmas dinner. Consequently, if crops have been good, if work is plentiful, if people are healthy, the conditions are favorable to a liberal expenditure upon the table, and the grocer will need to have a goodly supply of special Christmas lines. The Christmas trade done in the same neighborhood varies with the general prosperity. We know some grocers whose records of Christmas trade with the same customers for a series of years differ very widely and irregularly, sometimes showing twice the trade done for one Christmas of that done for another. Every depression in this record of Christmas trade was found to have been in a bad year in that neighborhood. If this lesson can be learned after the fact, it can be more or less clearly apprehended before it. Where production has been restricted there is seldom much need to lay in a large stock of Christmas supplies. But where people are prosperous and contented it is reasonably certain they will spend a merry Christmas and the grocer may anticipate a liberal demand. Where he has apparent reason for counting on a good trade he might begin early enough to provide for it. The coming Christmas, ought to be generally a good one in Canada and retailers will be likely to buy freely. Those who put off buying till just on the eve of need may have to pay fuller prices.

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It would be an easy matter for two competing grocers to do business in the same dis-