



**THE CANADIAN GROCER**  
& GENERAL STOREKEEPER

PUBLISHED WEEKLY  
\$200 PER YEAR

Published in the interest of Grocers, Cannery, Produce and Provision Dealers  
and General Storekeepers.

Vol. V.

TORONTO, NOVEMBER 6, 1891.

No. 45

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**THE J. B. McLEAN PUBLISHING COMPANY,**

FINE MAGAZINE PRINTERS

AND

TRADE JOURNAL PUBLISHERS.

HEAD OFFICE: 6 Wellington West, Toronto.

MONTREAL OFFICE: 115 St. Francois Xavier St.  
G. Hector Clemes, Manager.

NEW YORK OFFICE: Room 105, Times Building,  
Roy V. Somerville, Manager.

**SPECIAL TO OUR READERS.**

As the design of THE CANADIAN GROCER is to benefit mutually all interested in the business, we would request all parties ordering goods or making purchases of any description from houses advertising with us to mention in their letter that such advertisement was noticed in THE CANADIAN GROCER.

What with the prevalence of keen competition, the pettiness of people's tempers, and the shortcomings of salesmen, the trader is often put to his wit's end to solve the problem how to retain his hold on a body of desirable custom that may have drifted to his shop. For a moment, as it were, he may find himself surrounded by a group of substantial families whose trade is large and perfectly safe, but just when he is beginning to felicitate himself upon this acquisition, the visits of this or that particular one of the solid customers begin to fall off. Such defections must always be, even if grocers were perfect mortals: that is, the fault is not always on the grocer's side, and therefore not always within his power of correction. But where he is able to control circumstances that cause such withdrawals, he should be vigilant and prompt to do it. The whim, crankiness, or taste of a customer must not be taken against the grain if it is possible to humor it, but not always is it possible. In the case of reasonable people who look for a pretty close correspondence between what

they want and what they get, the fault is usually the dealer's if their custom silently steals away.

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When it goes it most commonly does steal away. The trader is given little warning. Ten chances to one he never hears any complaint about faulty delivery, unsatisfactory value, bad stock or any other defect on the part of him or his. The majority of people do not like to wrangle. If they get stale eggs morning after morning, strong butter every time they buy, tea below the standard of what used to be sent, they will probably stand it awhile, the wife or housekeeper may repine a little about it to a neighbor, who will at once dilate on the excellence of some other grocer's tea, service, etc., and the result will be that trade is transferred from the dealer complained of by one customer to the dealer who is lauded by another. Thus custom migrates, and the medium on which the best of it shifts is opinion more or less publicly uttered. It would certainly be more satisfactory to the well-meaning members of the trade, if their patrons were generally given to grumbling more. If customers would let their dissatisfaction be heard at the counter oftener, there would probably be more attached trade than there is to-day, and every live grocer would hail with approval the general adoption of such a practice. Those traders who make it a point to use, well every body who deals with them, ought to display in their stores and on their wagons the notice that all customers dissatisfied with the way orders are filled or delivered will oblige by making complaint.

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This would enable the trader to get at and amend the causes of loss of custom. He will by this means also be able to study his best customers, and once their peculiarities are known to their grocer, there will be small danger of their custom leaving him, provided of course that he puts his know-

ledge to use in their behalf. It is an easy enough matter to become intimate with the nature of the grocery wants in each household worth making a study of. It seems difficult, but if there were a hundred such customers to look after, a man with a progressive purpose in him would soon know all their shopping eccentricities. A mailing clerk will learn in a few weeks just in what one of a few hundred compartments any particular letter should be placed, that knowledge involving several particulars as to branch of railway, time of next mail train, etc., relative to the post offices named in the addresses. The task a grocer sets himself, when he aims to become acquainted thoroughly with the idiosyncracies of each family in the range of his best custom is a much easier one than the mail clerk's.

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The value of a complaint must be estimated according to its source and according to the views of the trader to whom it is made. There are some people who will complain upon the least grounds, or upon no grounds at all. Then there are traders who take a complaint as an insult. The latter are to be pitied, as the less disposed they are to stand fault-finding the less adapted they are for trade, and the chances are numerous against their success. Just complaints are the escape valves of adverse opinion that may grow so strong as to damage or wreck a business, if it finds no vent or satisfaction in grumbling. The man who grumbles with cause puts the dealer on his guard, who can thus lay in the goods that suit, correct his delivery-wagon driver, or in any other way rectify evils that may ensue in loss if not checked. Live merchants are uneasy when nobody complains. They are conscious that in everything human there are faults, but they aim to have no faults in their way of doing business except such as they cannot help. Hence, they lay hold of every murmur for their own improvement, and have misgivings that some trade is slipping from their grasp if there is no imperfection pointed out. They wisely encourage customers to speak out, and prefer criticism to withdrawal of trade.