

it. In the west, one change has already been announced and certain others are said to be imminent. These withdrawals are not on account of the improving opportunities for money-making that the wholesale grocery trade offers. On the contrary, it may well be supposed that the diminishing returns from capital invested in that trade are the cause of any retirements now made or contemplated. The course of prices during the last twelvemonths afford every reason for believing this. The decline in values has been most marked in that time. The reduction varies from five to fifty per cent. and takes in a long list of articles. Among them may be named sugar, syrups, tea, Valencia raisins, currants, spices, canned vegetables, canned fruits, canned salmon (until the last few weeks) and other articles. In several of these—sugar, Valencia raisins, salmon, and canned goods—the wholesale grocer's margin has had to part with nearly the whole difference between last year's prices and this year's. The freight tonnage handled by the wholesale grocers this year does not represent much below the same cost, exception being made for sugar alone. The shrinkage in prices has been very general in most foods, wheat being something above a dollar at this time last year, and now selling at about 75c., while potatoes have rarely sold for a third of last crop-year's prices. The year from the 30th of June, 1891, to the 30th of June, 1892, was a bad one for prices in most lines of production, so that if the wholesale grocers did not make their usual profits they were not alone in this experience.

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The Halifax Morning Chronicle understands that the Nova Scotia sugar refinery has been shipping yellow sugars to New York, and that it has realized better prices on them in that city than it can get in Canada. If this is the case, the fact furnishes the strongest comment on the lowness of prices in this country. It scarcely seems credible that a Canadian refinery can pay a duty of $\frac{1}{2}$ c. per lb. and the freight to New York, and yet undersell domestic refiners in that city. Of course it is easier to make sales of Canadian yellow in that market than it is to make sales of Canadian granulated. The number of grades of the former enables a seller to make a very good showing in favor of his price if his sample compares well in brightness with a sugar of much greater saccharine strength. The better sugar is not always the better seller, in all cases of two

given competing samples of yellow. A low price and a good appearance are the main selling conditions, and against this combination a good appearance alone or a low price alone is handicapped. The lowest price going for yellow in New York is slightly over 3.3c. per lb. To compete with that grade it would be necessary for Canadian refiners to sell at about $2\frac{3}{4}$ c., but it is unlikely that it was the lowest grade that was sold. Yellow sugar is now getting so little attention that it is not surprising that efforts are made to make sales outside, though it is surprising that sales are made in New York.

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The strict enforcement of the Weights and Measures Act in England appears to call for the prosecution of all traders who include the wrapping paper in the weights they give. Inspectors have for some time acted upon this literal and rigid interpretation of the Act, and have not only prosecuted traders charged with selling paper in the weight paid for but have set informers to work to catch grocers in a breach of the Act. Some cases are at present pending against certain grocers at Wolverhampton. The ground taken is, that in the case of sales where the weight is made up of the commodity and the enclosing paper, the customer gets only the gross weight he asked for, while the net weight of his purchase should be the number of pounds or the fraction of a pound he asked for. It would seem that the tare in a paper package of tea whose gross weight is one pound is too small a matter for any one to make a row about. If it were a chest of tea or a barrel of sugar, the case would be different, but in a hand package of tea or sugar it is the mere shadow of a trifle. The grocer must get something for his paper, and that is a convenient way of getting it, while it defrauds nobody, the parcel being weighed out under the customer's eye.

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On another page "A Retailer" asks what stand the Wholesale Grocers' Guild takes on the matter of direct trade between wholesalers and consumers. We answer, that such trade is opposed to a cardinal principle, perhaps not expressed in any of its resolutions, but adopted in an agreement between it and the retail grocers of this city, and regarded in the best practice of its members by the Guild. There is usually exception made and allowed for the cases of buyers on a wholesale scale, such as restaurant keepers or hotel keepers or lumber men whose

orders are very large. But trade with consumers, such as the employes of a concern like that our correspondent speaks of is not done by the best houses. "A Retailer" would probably find that the practice would be stopped if he made complaint to Edgar Wills the Secretary of the Guild. It is a discreditable method of doing business, a small way of extending trade, and should be exposed. A house cuts a poor figure among its wholesale confreres when it descends to the pettiness of competing against the individual customers of its rivals. The Canadian wholesale grocery trade is old enough and ranks sufficiently high to have acquired some of the dignity that attaches to established and honorable bodies, and which is supposed to restrain individual members from courses that are not honorable or dignified. Its influence ought to be strong enough to be independent of formal articles or resolutions for the purpose of keeping down inclinations towards unbecoming business conduct. But it appears that the only standard of business virtue is that of each individual house, and it is gratifying that that is sometimes a sufficient guarantee for the protection of retail customers. But not in all cases. The other day a merchant in the wholesale grocery trade handed the writer a letter in which a customer, a retail grocer, made a specific charge of direct competition against himself by a wholesale grocery house. He was approached by a traveller of this house but did not purchase any goods from him. This traveller then went to several hotels in that place and sold each of them a bill of goods. These hotels had formerly been supplied by the trader first approached, but the traveller did not compensate him by any percentage on these sales. On the contrary, he went to the competitor of this trader and gave him 10 per cent. on the sales, though the buyers were not former customers of that trader. That way of doing business does not need to be characterized. Its recital suffices to condemn it and to make people who do such business ashamed of it.

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On second thoughts some of the people who were preparing to start new canning factories this year have decided not to make the venture. They have yielded to the suggestions of the situation, and have acted wisely, both in their own interests and the interests of the canned goods industry. Others have concluded to begin their first year by putting up but a small pack.