

QUALITY VERSUS CHEAPNESS.

During the last few years—a period of prosperity for most branches of Canadian industry—there has been a striking uniformity in the reports emanating from both wholesale and retail dealers as to the higher quality of the goods mostly asked for by the public. The people as a rule have had of late years plenty of money to spend, and they have used it in the gratification of a natural desire to possess not only a sufficiency of the necessaries and luxuries of life, but in obtaining such articles of a high class and durable nature. In many lines of dry goods, of both fancy and a staple description, this feature has been particularly marked, and has done much to account for the highly satisfactory turnovers in that trade which have been reported during the last few seasons.

That this grading up of quality is a consummation devoutly to be wished in the interests of trade need scarcely be contended. But it also evidences a craving which without a doubt is bound to react to the best interests of the consuming public as well. The more discerning well realize this; have, in fact, generally contrived to act in accordance with their circumspection, and have, as far as their means would allow, always thought of the quality of their purchases rather than of their cheapness. But with regard to the masses, the buying capacity of whom it is that in the end creates what is known as the volume of trade, their present good intentions to think chiefly of quality may be only a current phase due to their prosperity; and it may pass away with a decline of the latter.

It is to this possibility we look with some misgiving. Cheapness is one thing—the attachment of a fair reasonable price to any given article of commerce; the so-called cheapness of paying for an article which has only a veri-similitude to that which it pretends to be is another matter altogether. And, at some periods of flagging trade, there is so much temptation to the turning out of such miserable goods! Prices are cut to attract custom; what more natural for the next step to be the offering of goods which merely *seem* right. The price becomes set at a lower mark; the customer calls more and more for such, or rather for the price at which these are accustomed to be sold; the retailer naturally asks the wholesaler to supply a cheaper and still cheaper grade; the wholesaler passes on the request to the manufacturer, and he, of course, through competition, has to set about supplying the demand. A constant sacrifice of real worth to false cheapness!

And who gains in the end? Not the poorer consumer, because it is only the rich man who can afford to buy and pay for such mistakenly cheap goods; not the retailer or jobber or wholesaler, because the annual turnover of either speedily becomes contracted; and not, in the last reckoning, the maker of the goods, because in the long run faith in goods of such poor quality is altogether given up, and the demand shows a serious slackening. Not only this, but we believe it could be shown in the world's history that whole industries have here and there fallen into disrepute merely through this running after cheapness at all costs.

SEPTEMBER FIRE WASTE.

According to a careful compilation made by the New York Journal of Commerce, the total loss through fires in the United States and Canada during the month of September just past was \$14,387,650, a sum very considerably in excess of the loss either in the same month of last year or in August, 1904. The following summary will show the loss by months for three years in detail:

	1902.	1903.	1904.
January	\$15,032,800	\$13,166,350	\$21,790,200
February	21,010,500	16,090,800	90,051,000
March	12,056,600	9,907,650	11,212,150
April	13,894,600	13,549,000	23,623,000
May	14,866,000	16,366,800	15,221,400
June	10,245,350	14,684,350	10,646,700
July	10,028,000	12,338,600	11,923,200
August	7,425,550	8,428,350	9,715,200
September ...	9,945,000	9,939,450	14,387,650

Total 9 mos. \$114,504,400 \$114,971,550 \$208,560,500

The total loss for the whole of last year (twelve months), it may be remembered, was only \$156,195,600, as against a total for only nine months of the current year of \$208,560,500. The high aggregate for September, was brought about by severe fires in Halifax, Montreal, and in the middle-western States. One feature which seems to have been rather marked during the month was incendiarism, which was responsible for several fires. Execration for incendiaries cannot be too severe. It is distressing enough to have to hear of the regularity and immensity of burnings from what we have come to consider "natural" causes, without having fires set. Hard labor, pillory, the lash, heavy fines—any or all these are deserved by the scoundrel who fires his neighbor's property.



OUR HALIFAX LETTER.

All the firms that were burned out in the recent disastrous fires on the waterfront have their plans for rebuilding well defined. The majority will soon have more commodious warehouses and offices than before the fires. Business is being carried on as usual by the various firms in temporary quarters. The heaviest local losers will be the home insurance companies, whose losses are quite heavy. All the Halifax insurance companies were hit rather hard, and the dividends of some of them may for a time be affected. An investigation into the origin of the two fires has been ordered by the Mayor, and is now being proceeded with before the stipendiary. No evidence of importance has so far been discovered, other than the fact that a considerable quantity of dynamite and powder was found stored in one of the warehouses, in violation of a city by-law. The representative of the Fire Underwriters attempted to question the witness as to the manner in which the fires were handled by the City Fire Department, but the stipendiary refused to take testimony on this point. One result has been the decision to purchase a fire-boat to aid in subduing future fires on the waterfront.

A new corporation is being launched in this city under the name of the "Annapolis Valley Fruit Estates, Limited." The names of the incorporators have not yet been announced, but it is said that among others, Prof. Sears, of the Horti-