

DO NOT XEROX

# THE CANADIAN GROCER

& GENERAL STOREKEEPER

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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.

THIS WEEK'S MOTTO:

Keep thy shop and the shop will keep thee.

It is an unreasonable and unjust law which makes the grocer the scapegoat of manufacturers who produce impure goods. In the case of the manufacturer or wholesaler charged with selling adulterated goods, the package is allowed to speak for itself. Upon its evidence the accusation stands or falls. The word "compound," plainly marked on the package, saves the accused, if the mixture be one of the permitted sort. Why should not the same evidence be acceptable in the defence, as it is in the prosecution of a grocer? A package of coffee bears the word "compound" upon it, a grocer makes a sale from its contents to some one who wants a pound of 30-cent coffee, the buyer turns out to be a detective in the service of the Inland Revenue department, the coffee is officially analyzed, is found to contain chicory, the grocer is billed with the costs of examination (\$14), and may feel thankful that he is not fined fifty dollars for violating the Adulteration Act. In a case of this kind the

detective makes it a point to know nothing but the bald facts—that he asked for coffee, that he was given what was contained in the package submitted for analysis, that he was not advised of any mixture, and that the stuff was therefore sold for coffee, not "coffee compound." Probably he saw no package; if he did, and noted the word "compound" on it, he did not see fit to pay any attention to it, choosing to rest his case upon the facts, that coffee he asked for, and coffee compound he got. The law says that harmless compounds must be "sold and offered for sale as compounds." Should the grocer sell to the informer from an original package which does not bear the word "compound," and the article of food so sold turn out to be impure, the informer can trust the evidence of his eyes in that case, and will be sure to remember that the package had not the saving word upon it.

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The grocery trade is becoming as ticklish a calling as that of the druggist. In his own defence the grocer will have to label his parcels "compound," when they contain anything to dilute the pure article. Coffees, spices, etc., must no longer be defined simply by the price, but by the term "compound" or "pure." A customer wants a 25 cent coffee, and so words the order. The grocer must re-word it inquiringly in the form "25 cent coffee compound." There must be this clear understanding between the buyer and seller, for the latter to keep within the law. People will never learn to use the defining word in giving orders, but that is no reason why the grocer should expose himself to the danger of prosecution. It is not always an angel you are entertaining unawares, but sometimes a minion of the Inland Revenue Department, and it is as well to acquire the habit of caution.

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THE GROCER upholds pure goods, and deplures the causes which have led to so

general a vitiation of quality. Adulteration comes of unbridled competition, of which the motto; Cheapness at any sacrifice. Many consumers who buy cheap goods are unaware that the quality is debased to the price, and believe that the price is lowered to the quality. It is well that these should be protected, and the law holding the manufacturer responsible is in the public good. But it should not make the trader sponsor of the manufacturer. If the grocer had any special privileges to balance his special responsibilities in this matter, there would be no cause of complaint. But license or other protection usually goes with the liability of inspection in every other calling. The druggist is made responsible for the consequences of mistakes made by himself or, in matters of quantity, by the physician whose prescription he has to fill; but the trade of the druggist is protected by legal requirements as to examination, service and professional course, that narrow the gate for the entrance of competitors. The saloon keeper must submit to inspection and regulation, but he is protected by a license fee and a limitation of competition. The grocer alone has to submit to vexatious espionage and be exposed to the risks of prosecution, without a single compensating privilege. It is right that the public should have a fair chance to choose between pure and impure articles of food, but this should be possible without introducing Noah Claypole into the grocery trade. The inspector, if there is to be one, should be a member of the trade, acquainted with the situation in which the grocer is placed, and prepared to distinguish between cases of fraudulent intent and mere inadvertence. But a regular informer, chosen because of some lowly service as a party hack, can do no good to the cause of purity. Where inspection is carried on for the sake of the inspector rather than of the public, who have made no complaint about adulterated coffee, it is apt to be oppressive.