

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, SEPTEMBER 4, 1891.

No. 36

J. B. McLEAN,
President.

HUGH O. McLEAN,
Sec.-Treas.

THE J. B. McLEAN PUBLISHING COMPANY,
FINE MAGAZINE PRINTERS
AND
TRADE JOURNAL PUBLISHERS.

HEAD OFFICE: 8 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.

Now that the country is blessed with an abundant yield, it is to be hoped that the farmers will not follow any obstructive tactics, to delay that circulation whose mainspring is in the produce stored or being stored in their barns. They have the grain, they need the money, and the palms of their creditors, the country merchants' are itching to handle some of it. The crop has done its part, and now the farmers ought to do theirs. The policy of hanging back to wait for better prices they have tried again and again, though not with general satisfaction, and they may do it again. Thus they may put brakes on the business that the country is naturally prepared for. The reaping is assured but the marketing is not.

The country merchant cannot but look on with exasperation at good market prices melting away, while the local farmers are idly holding on for an advance. On the verge of the McKinley Act's coming into force last October there was a general rush of barley to the border, but there were not wanting farmers who missed that tide of the market merely through waiting for it to rise a cent

or two higher. When they have a good thing they are prone to wait for a better. Like the Indian, too much, with them, is enough. There are times when holding is warranted, when it is not a matter of pure chance, but the prompting of clear insight into the situation. This, however, only the few possess, and it is more like the gift of divination than business sagacity.

After the country merchant has carried a dozen or more farmers all year, he naturally becomes impatient with the complaisant way those customers have of leaving him out of the question when the time for selling their grain comes. If prices do not suit them, and seldom the opening prices do, they will wait with the utmost calmness until prices have to suit. The country store continues to be their commissariat, and the merchant may make what shifts he can to pay old debts and buy new goods without their money. Instead of a bright spell of fall trade he has to lengthen out a little longer his experience of "niggering it through."

The country merchant would probably be neither better nor worse off than he is to-day, if, instead of selling all his goods at a price to his farmer-customer, he entered into a grub-stake contract with the latter, agreeing to clothe and feed the farmer and his family for half the farmer's crop. And though luckless prospectors have often eaten the settler out of house and home under a grub-stake contract, yet they have more frequently raised him to affluence than the farmers have done the country merchants. Many a rural trader has gone to the wall, not because his assets did not balance his liabilities, but because too great a proportion of the assets were book-debts against farmers, and so not immediately or not completely convertible into money. Farmers' debts are a sufficient

mill-stone round the trader's neck without the addition of postponed marketing when the market is good.

If everything goes well, there ought to be an increase in business, not only temporarily but throughout the year. This fall ought to place many farmers in a better position. It should enable mortgages to be raised, machinery to be paid for, old accounts to be settled, etc. If it does there will be less to hamper the farmer and keep down his living wants to a low point. Thus he ought to be a better customer throughout the year. The fact that his consumptive capacity has been kept within narrower bounds by harder times in the past ought itself to beget a reaction in favor of the trader.

Of the money obtained from the sale of farm products in the fall, the country merchant has often to be thankful if he gets only what is owing him on account. When the farmers have plenty of money they do not as a rule bring it to him. They go to the town or city where prices are cut and with their ready cash they get bargains. They have little use for their creditor when cash abounds. He supplies them with what they need when they have no money, and the close urban seller supplies them when they have. The country merchant should therefore have good interest on the capital that is locked up in the farmhouses from autumn to autumn. His prices ought to be such as will enable him to recoup himself for the long use of his money his credit customers have had. Thus he will to some extent even up the drawback of long and large credit with fair prices. There is no reason why he should lose profit as well as interest. If he does not look after these matters and tax his credit customers for them, he will find that his cash customers, who supply the mobile capital necessary to keep business going on, are really carrying the credit customers.