

enjoyed as compared with the retailer. The latter was compelled to pay duty on his goods, apart from the harassing delays incident to customs regulations, while the former could get his books duty free, the post office sufficing as his shipping agent, freight carrier, Custom House, and Custom House broker. This injustice was happily done away with by the present tariff regulations, but not till after repeated representations on the part of the lending dealers.

At the recent convention in Chicago resolutions were adopted with reference to general abuses which have demoralized the book-trade of late years, and urging the necessity of reform. Those who remember the attempt made some years ago to check the evils which then as now were recognized by the trade, and the dreary failure that followed, will not be sanguine as to any enduring results from the Chicago Convention. Nevertheless it would seem that the mere instinct of self-preservation would compel the trade to arrange some concert of action and adhere to it. The bookseller is essential to the success of the publisher, and he cannot prudently be displaced by the book agent, or by any system of direct dealing by mail and express between publisher and buyer. The bookstore, with its opportunities for the leisurely inspection of books, and with the suggestions as to editions, styles, bindings and prices which the intelligent bookseller is able to make, should be the medium through which publishers should reach the book-buying public. But the bookseller's prosperity has been assailed from so many different quarters of late years that he is in a fair way to be eliminated from the trade unless some thing is shortly done in his behalf. He cannot carry a stock large enough to secure and retain custom unless he has a margin sufficient to secure him against loss. There are various contingencies connected with the business which the prudent dealer must provide for, with every fair chance conceded, such as miscalculation as to the demand for some work of sudden popularity, and overloading his shelves with unsaleable stock, as recently witnessed in the case of a Toronto firm. There are fashions in books as well as in bonnets, with the advantage in favor of the latter that economy often finds a way to "make them over again." A bookseller's stock is not perishable in the same sense that a fruiterer's is, but the books are few which make a "hit," and fewer still which take a place as permanent literature, and the dealer who carries over any considerable supply of one season's books to the next, unless they are tolerably good

editions of standard books, is almost as badly overloaded as a millinery house burdened with last year's styles.

In order to have a "fair chance," especially if his book-buying constituency be not a large one, the ordinary trade discounts of the bookseller are not too great—to afford him a fair living profit. Here the publisher steps in with the advertised offer to send to any buyer, postage paid, and at the regular retail price, any book on his list. The buyer has little reason to go to the book store when he can deal direct with the publisher on the same terms. But this is not the worst of it. The publishers have an easy code by which they admit to the privileges of full trade discounts a good many large buyers, and some who are not large buyers, and the booksellers are few, probably, who have not had some customer leave them in a rage because they could not give him as good terms as he had been in the habit of getting from the publishers. When a bookseller discovers that the man to whom he is trying to sell books can actually buy at better terms than he can, he might be pardoned for putting up his shutters and going out to drown himself. Again, the quickest-selling books are often taken from him altogether and sold by agents on the subscription plan, while he is cut off largely from the handling of text books by the direct dealings of publishers with committees, school boards and teachers. Taking all these things into consideration, it is clear that the lot of the average bookseller is quite far from being a happy one. The traditional bookseller of the past, intelligent, courteous, with a genuine love for books and an extensive acquaintance with their contents, is fast becoming only a tradition, or if he lingers it is to find himself crowded to the wall by practitioners of the new order of things.

DARK SUGAR.

The West India planters in the British Colonies are not a little indignant at the charges of fraud which have been made against them by the revenue department in the United States, and which eventuated in the appointment of a Commission of Enquiry, to take evidence in support of the theory of artificial coloring. It was long a most perplexing question in England how the sugar duties ought to be levied. There, as in the United States, there were conflicting interests. The grocers were always opposed to the sliding scale, which prevailed during a long period of years, and which was established in the interest of the refiners. It was contended on the one hand that it was not fair to the refiners to charge the same duty per lb. on

the inferior brown sugar used by them, as on the crystallized centrifugal, which has of late years been produced in British Guiana and Trinidad. The planters, on the other hand, held that it was unfair to place obstacles in the way of their producing the best article which their improved machinery enabled them to supply. For many years it was the duty of experienced overseers to take care that the sugar should be kept below the standard which would have subjected it to a higher rate of duty. The test of a good manager was to be able to produce a sugar which would approach as nearly as possible to a given standard without quite coming up to it. In England there was constant party warfare over the sugar duties, which led the late Lord Beaconsfield once to remark: "Strange that a manufacture which charms infancy and soothes old age should so frequently occasion political disaster."

So far as we are able to judge from the tone of the West India press, the charge of fraud is wholly without foundation. If a sliding scale of duties be adopted by the Legislature of any State, there can be no doubt that the manufacturers will endeavor to produce an article that will be entitled to admission at a low rate, and it is most unreasonable to characterize this as fraudulent. The agency of lime is employed, according to some of the witnesses, to darken the sugar. An excess of lime and an increase of heat in the vacuum pan are resorted to to coat over the crystals. Again it is said that lime is simply added to darken the sugar. The commission seems to be considered by the Colonial press to have been a failure, and it is suggested that, if another should be sent on a similar errand, a lawyer should be thrown in to complete the happy family, and to take care that there should be more unanimity among the witnesses. We are not aware whether the question has been raised at any of the Canadian custom houses as to the coloring of sugar, but we imagine that a very large proportion of the imports from the West Indies is admitted at the lowest rate of duty, and we presume it is the policy of the Government that it should be so admitted. No better evidence can be adduced of the effect of the duties than the fact that the white crystallized centrifugal, which is largely consumed in England, is not to be obtained in Canada. Before the free admission into the United Kingdom, the same sugar, but of a bright yellow color, was the favorite article for export, as by the color test it was passed at a lower rate than the white. We have not heard