

The Premium System.

The so-called premium system, which originated about ten years ago in the west, has now been tried by a large number of grocers in New York and vicinity. The system consists in giving a present to a customer after he has bought goods for cash up to a certain amount. These amounts are generally fixed either at \$25 or \$50. The presents given are usually cheap books, albums, a Waterbury watch, a dozen silver-plated spoons, or some other silver-plated goods. The articles given away are supposed to be worth from \$3 to \$5 or more, but may be bought at less than \$1. In order to know when the necessary amount of goods has been bought, the customer receives a card, on which the amount of every purchase is marked or "punched out."

In order to ascertain to what extent this plan of advertising benefits the retail grocer, the writer made enquiries in several stores where the system is in use. Some of the storekeepers who had tried the system were in favor of it under certain conditions, while others were very much opposed to it. One grocer in a German district, on Avenue A, claimed that he had increased his weekly sales more than \$100, but how much he had increased his actual profits he was not prepared to say. To the argument that he was giving away from 4 to 5 per cent of his profits to the customers receiving the presents, he replied that it would still leave him nearly 10 per cent net profits, and as his general expenses were not increased by the extra business done, he thought he was making nearly \$10 extra every week. And then he remarked that a number of the new customers he had made by his inducements might stay with him after he had discontinued the system.

Several others, however, claimed to be direct losers by using the premium system. One man said that he had not procured a single customer by it, and as he was giving presents to his old customers, he was losing all he had paid for the premiums. Another man said that his customers did not want any presents, because they were to well off and too proud to accept gifts which were not good enough for them.

The conclusions to which these enquiries lead are that the premium system may be of some benefit to a grocer in a district inhabited by the poorer classes, but it is utterly impractical in a better neighborhood.

Those who derive the greatest benefit from it are the proprietors of new stores, who thus advertise their store in the neighborhood. Much depends, also upon the manner in which the system is introduced. Those who distribute the cards only in their store, and thus give them only to their own customers, simply waste their money.

The proper way to advertise the system is to put the cards on which the presents are promised into the hands of every housekeeper in the neighborhood. This can be done in several ways. Some grocers have their clerks or a boy in the neighborhood go to every family to deliver the cards, and some even send the cards by mail. For this purpose they must first procure the address. This is sometimes a very difficult. A simple way to obtain the addresses of the people in the neighborhood is to buy the election list of the assembly district in which the store is located. The election list of any district may be bought for five cents. It contains the names of every registered voter. In some houses the names of the families may be found over the letter boxes.

But, after all, it is best to think twice before introducing the premium system.—C. H. K. in *Retail Grocers' Advocate*.

Bleeding Bread.

Considerable dismay was caused in England during the recent hot weather by the appearance of blood stains in bread, and also in boiled potatoes, rice and other farinaceous substances. In superstitious times this somewhat rare

phenomenon was regarded as a miracle, but modern science has shown that it is due to the growth of a microscopic plant, which is known to some, according to Dr. M. C. Cooke, as *micrococcus prodigiosus*, and to others as *bacillus prodigiosus*. The true explanation of the terrifying blotches was first pointed out by a Paduan naturalist in 1819. The same production was seen near Berlin by Ehrenberg in 1848, at Rouen by Dr. Camille Montaigne in the same year, and was first recorded in Britain in 1853. About 1880 an epidemic visitation on the Continent was attributed to this source. Carmine-red patches, capable of staining the fingers, appeared on cooked meat during the night, and various articles of food were similarly affected until, after about three months, the epidemic suddenly ceased on the advent of a lower temperature. Fresenius found the individual organisms to be round or oval cells not more than 12,000 to 14,000 of a line in diameter. They develop only in the dark, and when kept continuously at a temperature of 100 degrees F. their color is gradually lost.

The British Grain Trade.

The London cable report for the week ended Feb. 10, says:—The weather has been mild during the past week and the crop outlook is satisfactory. The Wheat market has been quiet and the United Kingdom demand has been poor with prices easy. There was some French demand for cargoes arrived. La Plata Wheat was quieter, and Australian is now offering in the parcel trade with poor trade. American Wheat is selling at prices below the record; Indian and Australian are depressed and spot business is slow. English is quoted at 6d. cheaper; foreign was hard to sell. California wheat was quoted at 26s. 3d. and hard Manitoba prompt was quoted at 26s. Flour was slow and easy to buy; shippers were steady. No. 1 Minnesota Bakers' went at 15s. 6d. to 17s. 6d.

Live Stock Markets.

At the Montreal stock yards the receipts of live stock for week ending February 10, were: 546 cattle, 70 sheep, 195 hogs, 92 calves; total for week, 588 cattle, 370 sheep, 195 hogs, 82 calves; on hand 7 cattle. Owing to the season, trade was not very brisk; everything sold, but prices paid were only fair. Light receipts of live hogs, prices about the same. Sheep, lambs and calves of good quality sell well. We quote the following as being fair values: Cattle, butchers' good, 3½ to 4s; cattle, butchers' medium, 3 to 3½c; cattle, butchers' culls, 2½ to 3c; lambs, 4 to 4½c; hogs, 5½ to 5½c; calves, 26 to \$12.

Flax Experiments in North Dakota.

The North Dakota experiment station has been, during the past year, conducting some interesting experiments with flax, one of the leading products of that state, says the Sioux city *Journal*. It tried flax from Belgium seed, which it reports as growing from 35 to 40 inches tall, and yielding about 3,800 pounds of unthreshed straw when grown for seed. When sown thickly and grown for fibre it grew 43 inches tall and made a most excellent, fine, long fibre. The flax plant seems to be peculiar in this, that where it is grown for seed alone for a number of years it forms the habit of short, bushy growth, and when the seed is taken from plants that have been sown thick and grown for fibre, it stretches up approximately to the fibre length. The Belgium seed sown on the soil of North Dakota seems to grow even longer than in its native home where 32 inches is a good height. The great wants of the flax industry are a machine that will pull flax satisfactorily and another that will trash it economically without tearing the fibre to pieces.

With these two machines invented, and they will be in time, the flax industry will take on a genuine boom in countries peculiarly adapted to its production, as are northwestern Iowa, Minnesota and the Dakotas.

The Dominion Government has intimated to the president of the Manitoba Dairy association that it will extend assistance to a series of meetings to be held next summer to further the dairy interests.

The great decline in silver may be illustrated by the following news item: "Counterfeit silver dollars made of pure silver, and therefore of a better quality than the genuine, were found afloat last week in Cuckonati, Ohio. Aside from a slight flaw in the mill fog, the coin could not be told from the genuine. At the present price of silver, counterfeiting with even pure silver gives the counterfeiter a profit of over 40 cents on every dollar."

A London cable says:—The imports from Canada show a remarkable increase during January. They totalled £173,049, an increase of 135 per cent, compared with the imports for the corresponding period last year. Wheat advanced to £12,900; bacon, £15,000; cheese, £21,000; fish, £31,000; and wood, £20,000. No eggs or animals were entered during the month. The exports to Canada during January from Great Britain totalled £351,111, a decrease of 10 per cent.

A Remarkable Experiment.—The novel electroscope of E. C. Rivington, an English electrician, is especially interesting on account of its generation of light by a very small mechanical effort. A I-shaped tube about five inches long, has its air exhausted by air-pump, and is then rotated between the finger and thumb, or by a small motor. On bringing a rubber ebouite or glass rod near, a set of double fan shaped images of light appear in the tube.

Value of Hands and Fingers.—The comparative value of the hands and fingers is fixed in a scale of the Miners' Unions and Miners' Insurance companies of Germany. The loss of both hands is reckoned as a depreciation in working capacity of 100 per cent; of the right hand, 70 to 80 per cent, varying with occupation; left hand, 60 to 70 per cent; thumb, 20 to 30 per cent; right forefinger, 14 to 18 per cent; left forefinger, 8 to 13.5 per cent; third finger, least in value, 7 to 9 per cent; little finger, 9 to 12 per cent.

The Halifax *Critic*, which has built up a reputation as the exponent of the mining, manufacturing, and commercial interests of the maritime provinces, is to enter upon an advanced field of usefulness, and makes its last appearance as *The Critic* with its issue of February 9th, having been absorbed by a limited company with ample capital and influence to maintain and rapidly promote the high aims of the founder of that journal. It will hereafter appear as the *Canadian Colliery Guardian*, and *Journal of the Iron and Steel Trades*. When paid in advance the subscription price will be \$1, otherwise \$1 50.

Glass Bricks.—Experiments with glass building bricks were begun in 1891 by M. Falconer, an architect of Lyons. These bricks are hollow, being blown like bottles, and are given forms—such as cubes, hexagons, etc.—that permit of ready laying. A bituminous cement, with a base of asphalt, is used with them. The bricks serve as double windows, giving protection against both cold and heat; they are good insulators of humidity and noise; and they lend themselves readily to the decoration of buildings either by their form or their color. Many applications are foreseen. The bricks are neater than marble in meat markets, and are especially adapted for bath halls, hot-houses, hospitals, refrigerating establishments, and buildings in which absence of windows would be an advantage. A house of glass bricks is of about ordinary cost, saves fuel, and resists hail.