

DRY GOODS VS. GROCERIES.



THE PRINCIPAL point with the general storekeeper to-day is the sharp and unwarranted curtailment of credit forced upon the country by such a close and cast iron organization as the Dominion Grocers' Guild. The city grocers are squirming under it. They have protested vigorously, but the only result has been the granting of ten days for discount and a sort of promise to list no more goods. The time concession could hardly be denied the country storekeeper, because it often takes ten days for the goods to arrive in stock and even now he is not on equal terms with the city merchant, who can get what he wants at any hour of the day from his wholesale house. Then the city grocer has cash customers or at most weekly and monthly accounts and settlements, and the new terms will not harass him so much as the general storekeeper, especially those who still stick to yearly settlements. The principal creditors of the general storekeeper are the Dry Goods, Hat and Cap and Boot and Shoe houses, and the question therefore naturally arises, is he in that case justified in taking his ready cash and meeting his groceries at thirty and ninety days? We have no hesitation in saying that he is not. These houses are in justice and fairness entitled to their pro rata share of cash receipts, and if any financial assistance should be needed the grocers are as much called upon to render it as the textile dealers. In January the tea and sugar are still booked in some stores along with the grey cottons and shirtings, which are selected now to be sewn during the winter months by the thrifty housewife, and paid for out of the proceeds of next season's crops. It is admitted that there are more \$1's worth of sugar put on the books in the first three months of the year than there are of dry goods. The print gowns, new dresses and other heavy dry goods' sales are made when the eggs come and "due bills" are devoted to the payment of these purchases. Yet we find dry goods delivered in January to March as 1st April—four months—while groceries are 30 and 90 days from delivery, and they are going on the store books more rapidly than the dry goods. It seems to us in these circumstances that if the Dry Goods importers are to hold their own and save themselves from being wiped out of existence they must in self-defence also shorten credits and insist on some security where renewals are necessary. The large and keen buyers and cash buyers have houses who cater for their trade, but let any house confine itself to that class exclusively and the principals will be forced to live on bread and water to save themselves from ruin. Any one of the wholesale merchants will admit that there is more money to be made out of the smaller but more loyal and numerous customer in the general store business, who buy on four months' time and pay their notes fairly prompt than from those who buy discounts first and to whom prices are shaved even to 2½ per cent. Even the wholesale grocers make less money out of their city and town customers than out of the general storekeepers, and the shortening of terms should in our opinion have been confined to cities and towns where merchants handle groceries exclusively and get paid in cash, or weekly or monthly. These merchants do not need longer credit than 30 and 90 days. The effect of dictating terms to the whole trade of the country and among a most deserving class cautious, intelligent, and economical men of limited means—may be to drive the trade into the hands of capitalists most of whom could start a wholesale grocery business themselves in each convenient distributing centre, and so save the services of so many high salaried grocery travellers, expensive office staffs, and warehouses in the cities. There is undoubtedly a feeling amongst country storekeepers that store credits should be shortened, and we strongly advise that all should insist on quarterly, or, at the very most, half-yearly settlements. If the latter then divide the year at 1st April and 1st October, while there is money circulating from eggs and butter, or early harvest, and before the interest on mort-

gage and agricultural implement note have absorbed it all. The other wholesalers will most assuredly contract terms, so as to get nearer the ground floor with the grocers. The prudent storekeeper will, therefore, do well to alter his mode of settlement at once, and also, as a precaution, see that he does not buy indiscriminately, but establish a credit with reliable houses in each line from whom he can get assistance at certain seasons, and when a financial stringency or a poor harvest comes he will not be forced to assign.

While the country is solvent enough there is very little profit being made by merchants, and all attempts to curtail credits should be thoroughly discussed by wholesale men amongst themselves and not sprung upon the trade as the grocery terms were, but be gradual and persistent. In a new country like ours barter still obtains to a considerable extent, and credit must continue liberal. Business cannot be done on the same lines as in the large manufacturing centres in the United States. The Dominion Grocers' Guild are protecting themselves against the sugar monopoly, but are the half of the traders in the country to be forced out of business or compelled to assign because, with their limited capital, they cannot comply with the grocers' requirements and pay up sharp? Let the whole credit system of the country be carefully discussed by experienced wholesale men, with a view to some curtailment, but let it be gradual, one step at a time, and the trade will be educated up and no one suffer in consequence.

THE RETAIL TRADE.



OUR agreeable surprise we found that in all the talks we had with dry goods retailers, about the past year's trade, general satisfaction prevailed at the volume of business done. It was far better than the previous year, some going as far as to say that in their individual cases it had been nearly double in all departments. Those who do a cash business accordingly reaped the full benefit of the increased trade. Where credit is given money was said on the whole to be coming in fairly well, although in some districts it was very scarce. There was a decidedly progressive improvement in the trade during the fall, in spite of all drawbacks. Previous to that the demand for goods seemed to be confined to the actual necessities of the consumer, but afterwards the demand was fully up to the supply of many of the staple fabrics of the market. The dress trade was exceptionally good, and hosiery was in great request. The woollen department of the trade has not been very lively, but there are prospects that it is gradually brightening, although the business done has not been satisfactory. The general feeling among retailers, as far as we were able to ascertain, is one of hopefulness for the coming year.

HIGHLY COMMENDABLE.



FIVE years ago Mr. George Sumner, of Hodgson, Sumner & Co., Montreal, an ex-President of the Dominion Commercial Travellers' Association, conceived and carried into effect a philanthropic scheme which cannot be too highly eulogised. It was the foundation of a trust for the education of children of deceased members of the Association who had left their families without the proper means of support. There are at present five children—three boys and two girls—receiving the benefits accruing from the trust, four of whom are being educated in the best schools in Montreal and one in Newfoundland. In this way those in charge of the trust have supervision of the children during their education, and in the case of boys obtain positions for them in commercial life similar to what their fathers occupied. The trustees have now asked the Association to