

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.

In this month the country merchant usually makes out the accounts of his credit customers. When the debtors are numerous and the accounts lengthened out by a great many small items, the task is no easy one. Where the trader is short-handed and has to make up his books by the light of the lamp, the difficulty of getting all the statements made out is sometimes very great. Stock-taking is not a more dreaded process. The making out of accounts is itself a species of stock-taking: the list of accounts rendered being an inventory of the whereabouts and the various amounts of the portion of the trader's capital that is held on a credit-tenure by his customers. There ought to be some satisfaction in the drudgery this year. The statements will be more likely to be followed by early and full payments than those of many past years. Taken from one end of Canada to the other, the crops are probably as good as were ever raised in the country. The basis of sufficient means, therefore, to pay the accounts of the country merchants is not wanting, though the conversion of products into money may not be generally negotiated as soon as desirable.

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A good big sheaf of country store accounts is undoubtedly valuable property this year, and in a farming section ought to represent

100 cents on the dollar. But there are other claims on the crop. A large amount has to go for interest on mortgages, to pay for buildings, farm implements, etc. There are many other creditors besides the country merchant waiting for the first movement of the grain crop, in order to change notes or accounts against farmers into cash. The merchant ought to be in ahead of everybody else. He should not be put off until the whole crop has been marketed and the proceeds transferred to the hands of implement men, note-shavers, etc. Accounts ought therefore to be made out and delivered, with the modest request that payment shall be made in a few days. It will not do to wait till the farmer asks for his account. Some traders have rather a slipshod habit of letting their books go to seed, as it were, simply charging for what is bought for future payment, and crediting what is given on account, never having clear ideas as to how this or that customer stands. Of course they lose money. The rule of making out statements of all, even the most petty, accounts on the books, ought to be rigidly followed at this time of year. When the customer gets his bill he should also be led to realize that prompt payment is the thing expected and desired. Scores of people receive their accounts without taking to themselves the hint that they are wanted to come down with the ready cash for the balance due. They frequently feel that the trader would not insult them by sending them a dun, but as he has a rule of making out accounts at this time of year, he simply hands them theirs in a formal sort of way. Then the matter is let go. The trader can get credit, and can afford to give some. They are good for the amount any time, and it's all right. There are plenty of people who could pay their accounts almost at sight, who are an unreasonably long time paying them, simply because they have this easy way of looking at their indebtedness. It

might awaken some conscience in them if they knew how exact the grocer's creditors are. The suggestion of early payment ought to be the postscript in every account.

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A class of account more difficult to collect than the farmers' is that of the workmen, mechanics and small tradesmen of the hamlets and villages in which country stores stand. Many of these are supposed to have something due them from the farmers at this time of year, and so ought to be served with statements now. Their accounts are supposed to be kept within narrower limits than the farmers', as their means of livelihood are generally taken up concurrently with consumption, so that there is less to look for from them in the fall. Such accounts ought at no time to represent any great amount of money.

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To some customers the merchant hands his statement of indebtedness with almost as much fear and trembling as the tailor experiences when he comes to try the finished coat on his most mulish customer. The trader knows beforehand that the debtor or the debtor's wife will vehemently declare there are things in that bill which were never received, or which, received, were paid for at the time. There are no means of proving the truth of the statement of account save by the merchant's books, and the books, the protesting debtor will affirm, have been stuffed with entries here and there that there was no corresponding business for. And let one protesting debtor whisper his suspicions to some other debtor, and there will soon be other protesters. This is one of the vexations of the credit system. The merchant carries the farmer all year, gets no thanks at the time, and gets abuse very often when the account comes to be settled. Pass-books or coupons ought to be used in every store where a credit trade is done. They keep the debtor reminded as to how fast his account is growing, and they furnish a check not only upon the entries in the merchant's books, but also on the reckless declarations that this or that particular item is wrong.