

Protest Against Departmental Stores.

A meeting of the Montreal Retail Grocer's Association was held to protest against the monopolizing and illegitimate methods of Departmental Stores, and was largely attended, and among the complaints brought against these revolutionary institutions was that of cutting prices. For instance, it was said that sugar had been sold at 8c per lb. which cost the grocers 4½c per lb. Croasse & Blackwell's pickles, bought by the grocers at \$3.25 a dozen, were being sold by the stores at 19c a bottle, and jam put up by the same firm, which cost \$2.40 a dozen was offered by them at 14 cents per bottle, etc. This fully confirms the charges of cutting brought by the Trade Bulletin in its issue of Dec. 25 last as follows:—

Not only do these stores trespass upon the business of special lines, but by selling a cheap class of goods they work further injury by affecting the prices of merchandise of a better quality. For instance, a few days ago a regular customer of a retail grocer of this city asked the latter the price of some canned goods, and when the regular figure was given the customer remarked:—"Oh! I can get them for 2c per tin less at the department store, and I shall also fill the rest of my requirements at the same place if you cannot give me the canned goods at what I can buy them for elsewhere." Rather than lose his customer, the grocer gave him a better brand of canned goods than the departmental store was offering. We mention this actual occurrence to demonstrate in how many ways the departmental stores are adversely affecting the retail grocers in the city; but this is only one of the many retail trade departments which suffer from the departmental system. We repeat that this innovation in the retail trade is manifestly unfair."

Several of the speakers suggested legislative aid with a view of imposing a tax on each additional department of the departmental stores. The following document has been signed by all the wholesale grocery establishments of the city with the exception of three:—

"We, the undersigned wholesale grocers' manufacturers and provision dealers and members of the Dominion of Canada, and agents representing foreign houses exporting their goods, wares, etc., to Canada, do hereby pledge ourselves not to sell directly or indirectly to departmental stores in Montreal, and that we will protect to the fullest extent in our power the legitimate retail grocery trade."

The principal object of Tuesday night's meeting was to submit this agreement to the whole trade and get the sanction of the society thereto. The speeches of the different members of the Association showed that they were in earnest in their protest against the illegitimate methods of cutting and monopolizing as practiced by the Departmentals. Customers of the latter overlook the fact that these "cuts" on certain "drawing" goods are offset by the profits obtained on other kinds of goods. The retail grocers are therefore special reasons for complaint against the injury inflicted upon their trade, through the unfair and illegitimate methods of the departmentals.—Montreal Trade Bulletin.

Explaining the Wheat Depression.

The Liverpool Corn Trade News in reviewing the breadstuffs market says: The number of live cattle and sheep existing in the United Kingdom and imported from abroad does not increase as rapidly as the human population, whereas in the matter of dead meat the increased importation, when reckoned per head of the population, is so very small that it can have hardly any appreciable effect on the consumption of breadstuffs. Neither can it be said that potatoes are this year supplanting bread to an unusual extent, for the crop this season is admittedly less abundant than has been the case in any recent year, excepting 1894. Probably the true explanation of the depression is the simplest, viz, that during the 34 weeks of the season which have already elapsed, there have been marketed by British farmers or foreign shippers a few hundred thousand quarters more breadstuffs than was needed. According to our usual way of reckoning the excess of imports over consumption since August 1st amounts to 563,000 quarters, whereas the port stocks show an increase of only 140,000 quarters since that date, the inference being that millers are cumbered with the difference of 420,000 quarters. A year ago the case was very different, for in the first 31 weeks of 1895-96 the imports and farmers' deliveries fell 800,000 quarters below the ordinary requirements. It is true that in the near future the difference is likely to be redressed, for the arrivals of the next five weeks will almost certainly fall short of requirements probably to the extent of 100,000 quarters per week, but the trade as a whole are incredulous on this point, and the few who believe it are indifferent as to any effect the light arrivals may have in the fine warm days of spring, when our own farmers will be free sellers of the balance of the old crop.

Winnipeg Board of Trade.

A meeting of the council of the board of trade was held on Tuesday afternoon.

A deputation from the Retailers' association, composed of Messrs. Deegan, Fowler and Grundy, made a request that the board of trade should endorse the petition they are presenting to the Dominion Government to provide by legislation that members of the civil service be not exempted from the operation of the garnishee law as to salaries, but that they be placed in the same position as other citizens are in this respect. The council unanimously resolved to accede to the request of the Retailers' association.

A letter from General Manager Stout, of the Dominion Express company, in relation to express charges on the western division of the C. P. R., which business men claim are excessive, was laid over for further consideration until the next meeting, when some further information will be secured.

Matters relating to the legal rate of interest were referred to a committee consisting of Messrs. Mathewson, Bole, Russell, Ashdown and Drowry, a bill has been introduced at Ottawa to fix the legal rate of interest at six per cent., providing that no matter what special contracts are entered into for a higher rate, no higher than six need be paid at maturity.

The matter of the inspection of gas and electric light meters was discussed and action deferred until the next meeting.

The matter of the McKenzie gas proposition to the city council was discussed at some length by the members of the council present, and as a result the following resolution was adopted:

"Resolved, that in the opinion of this council it would not be in the interest of the city of Winnipeg to incur the debt necessary to establish and maintain a rival system of gasworks in this city, and it would be advisable that the city should enter into some reasonable arrangement with the gas company to secure a reduction in the price of gas with such provisos as will secure further reductions from time to time."

Montreal Grocery Market.

Since our last report of the sugar market, advances from primary points have been weaker for both the raw and the refined article. A cable from London to-day quoted beet at 8s 9d for April and May, which shows a decline of 1½d since this day week. In New York granulated has also declined to \$1.25 per 100 lbs. net. On spot the market has been very quiet, and, notwithstanding the above week news, values are about steady at 4½ to 4½c for granulated, and at 3½ to 3½c for yellows, as to quality, at the factory.

There has been considerable business done in new molasses on local account during the past week. Sales of three cargoes of Barbadoes aggregating about 2,100 puncheons have been made at 8c, first cost at the island for future delivery. Two cargoes of Antigua molasses amounting to 1,200 puncheons have also been placed at about 21 to 22c here. These two latter cargoes were sold on guarantee of sample and gauge.

A feature of the tea market this week has been the fact that some large buyers who bought on speculation of a duty being placed on this article are already offering their stock on the market. The demand between houses has been fair, and several lines of Japans of 100 packages each have changed hands at prices ranging from 13½ to 21½c per lb. as to quality. There is a good enquiry for Japans at 18 to 19c, but grades of this class are very scarce. Stocks of all lines are light and the tone of the market on the whole is very firm, and in some cases holders are asking an advance of ½c per lb. over the figure that they would have accepted last week.—Gazette, April 16.

Oats at Montreal.

Considerable attention has recently been drawn to the large stock of oats in store here, amounting to 336,823 bushels; but they appear to overlook the fact that the great bulk of these oats are for export at open water, and will not be offered on this market, ocean space having already been engaged for them for May—June shipment. But the above is not an exceptionally large quantity to be held here at this season of the year, as a broker on change stated that some years ago over a million bushels were in store here, at this time, and they were mostly all shipped out by the first steamers. That year, however, it is said that prices advanced 8c to 10c per bushel, and sold up to 40c and 42c per bushel; they are only 23½ to 24c now; and it is expected that fully two million bushels will be shipped out of this port in May. We shall have to get considerable more oats, therefore, by the opening of navigation. May oats are quoted at 25½c.—Montreal Trade Bulletin.

Work on the new C.P.R. hotel at Revelstoke, British Columbia, has started. The hotel is to cost \$23,000.