

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.

THE TRADE OF 1890.

The trade of the year just closed has been neither good enough nor bad enough to make 1890 remarkable in commercial annals. There have been more than average conditions in some respects, and there have been unusual events, but the resultant of the often times opposing action of these has been nothing but mediocrity. No year can be taken by itself as a chronical oasis, cut off from the past and the future, and made to yield an account of all the causes for the condition of the trade done in it. The trade of a year is often affected by conditions or prospects that lie outside of its calendar limits. The production of 1890 was undoubtedly sufficient to have nourished a better trade than it did, and it would have done so had there not been a shadow hanging over trade from 1889. Had 1889 not been so bad, 1890 would have been better. The indebtedness of the former year absorbed much of the surplus of the latter, which thus went to liquidate unpaid accounts of past trade, instead of going to the support of current trade.

Another legacy from the hard times of 1889 was the enforced frugality that was a marked feature of country consumption up to the taking off of last harvest. In the former year many crops had turned out poorly, and the price of barley had been low throughout. More than one repetition of bad crops had taught farmers to be less sanguine

and venture less into debt on the strength of prospects. There was a living within their present means, therefore, that had its lowering effects upon trade. On the other hand, the reduction of wants kept the burden of debt lighter than it would have been. Conservative ideas prevailed, and if they had not, insolvency would have been a much more general result of the scarcity of money in the agricultural portions of the country.

The last harvest was a very good one, and the maturing of it gave an impetus to trade. The large increase of the United States duty on barley was anticipated by the maltsters of that country, and they were after our crop before it was quite ready for the market. Most of it, however, got into United States hands before the new tariff bill became law. Our wheat has not got into the hands of buyers so rapidly as the supposed weakness of the farmers would warrant us expecting. Higher prices are evidently looked for. The open autumn, so favorable to ploughing, and the badness of the roads, had their share in keeping the wheat crop from moving more rapidly. The fruit crop was short. But the hog market has been very good, and was open nearly all the year. Trade, however, did not become more than fairly good, money being needed to pay old accounts and interest.

The great financial stringency which followed the failure of Baring Bros. came at a critical time, just when the markets might be expected to mend, but the great scarcity of money that followed the London financial catastrophe put the prices of all commodities down, and the continuance of that scarcity has kept them down. The general scarcity of money was not an outcome of a shortage in natural or industrial production, but resulted from the great absorption of money to

keep interest paid on speculative undertakings chiefly in South America. This took money out of legitimate business, and thus removed another of the motive impulses to brisk trade.

The grocery trade has been fairly good. The wants which support that trade are less varying than those that support any other trade excepting alone the baker's. Buying of course has been limited, but not to the same extent as it was in 1889. A feature that distinguished the grocery trade of 1890 was the general steadiness of prices. Hardly in any line, if we except a spurt in sugar and another in tea, was there notable deviation from steady prices. The failures in the grocery trade were fewer in 1890 than in 1889.

CHEAPER BISCUITS.

On account of the easier values of flour, biscuit makers have lowered their prices in some lines. The reduction affects only those varieties upon which prices were advanced last June, and the present change brings us back to virtually the same prices. Snowflake and sodas are half a cent cheaper in 1 lb. packages, while the latter in 3-lb. packages are one cent cheaper per package. Oyster crackers, milk biscuits, butter crackers, and Graham wafers are also down half a cent. Other lines in which there is no change had not been advanced last summer, and are now at the price warranted by the present value of raw material.

The changes are all in the direction of lower prices, with the single exception of the alteration in the price of Sultana biscuits, which are a cent higher, solely because of the unusual dearness of Sultana raisins. Our Prices Current exhibit the quotations now holding.