

THE FRESH FRUIT TRADE.

The trade in fresh fruit ought to be a very remunerative one to grocers if a profit is made upon all of it that they sell. It would be much more remunerative if a profit were realized on all they should sell. Oranges, lemons, bananas, pineapples have for several years past been very cheap, the cost and facilities of rapid transportation having greatly improved in recent years, and removed one of the greatest obstacles in the way of general consumption. The development of the orange groves on this side of the Atlantic—in Florida and California—is another factor that has had great influence on the side of cheapness in the price of oranges. Consumption in consequence has expanded extraordinarily in the last ten years. The consumer can get a dozen good oranges for the same money he would have paid for three a few years ago. Bananas, which used to find their way only to the leading cities and in small quantities, owing to the time, cost and risk of transport, are now abundant and cheap, the establishment of steamship lines, the opening of new railways and the development of proper carriage facilities having done much to bring about the change. The enormous consumption benefited the grocer, who for years past has had a growing summer line in these and domestic fruits.

But while consumption has increased and the value of the grocers' trade correspondingly expanded, there has been one drawback. Despite the precautions taken in the packing, shipping, carriage and storage of the fruit, there would be loss through decline in quality, and re-packing would necessitate the separation of culls from choice stock. For this of course there had to be an outlet. It was considerable in quantity and far from worthless. Some one had to take it and the pedlars offered the needed relief. Here the difficulty commences. The low grade fruit and the pedlars are to the legitimate fruit trade as bankrupt stocks and bankrupts are to the hundred-cents-in-the-dollar trade. The pedlars buy this fruit at low prices. It is better to sell it to them at low prices than to allow it to become utterly unsaleable. The pedlars get the fruit, hawk it over the towns and cities, and quote prices that put the grocers out of competition with them, if comparison be limited to figures alone, and that it usually is by the consuming public. A housewife is offered a dozen of oranges for 20c., and has been charged

40c. for a dozen by her grocer. She will not compare the oranges, but will compare the prices, and the grocer's quotations will, of course, by this test be found wanting. The waywardness of human nature in trying the grocer's value on this narrow ground may be objected to, but objection to it will not correct it or turn to the grocer's counter the demand that has been warped towards the pedlar's wagon.

It is probably a fact that the inferior fruit of itself is not sufficient to keep the army of pedlars stocked all season. Their supplies have no doubt to be replenished now and then from passably good lines, but that fact does not diminish the force of the advantage pedlars have in their monopoly of the stock of inferior fruit. They are the only ones who can make anything out of such a monopoly, as their system of forced distribution is the only means of getting it into consumption in time to save it. A sprinkling of better fruit will go far to give plausibility to the pedlar's representations that his stock is as good as the grocer's. But the inferiority of the fruit is not the only cause of its cheapness at pedlars' hands. Peddling is itself a cheap way of trading. The license is low, the pedlar need not lay much out on his cart, wagon, horse or what he wears. Usually an Italian, his wants are few, supplied at the lowest cost, as a colony of them will inhabit one tenement and subsist on the barest and rudest necessities. The grocers, being a respectable body of traders, commanding sufficient capital to carry on business, paying taxes and heavy rents, and supporting manifold social expenses, bound to behave honorably by all, as they are always in the same place and aiming to deal with the same people, cannot do business on the slender margin of profit that suffices for the Italian pedlar.

The sanitary aspect of the peddling question was touched on in an extract published in this journal some time ago, under the title "Do Pedlars Disseminate Disease?" That is now to be looked into, so far as this city is concerned, by the health authorities, and it is understood that inspectors will investigate the state of the storage and ripening rooms used by pedlars. The fruit is often stored in the same room with a crowd of Italian men, women and children, not particular as to their personal cleanliness and often having one or two sick persons breathing the atmosphere in which the fruit is kept.

Thus the health department may do something to raise the status of the fruit peddling trade, and thereby second or supersede the influence of the Markets' and Health Committee. The wholesale trade cannot be expected to do anything in the matter. It is their business to sell in quantities, and if there are classes or conditions of fruit that cannot be got out of stock through the regular trade demand, it has to be sold through some other channel, and the peddling trade affords that channel.

INSOLVENCY LEGISLATION.

The draft of the proposed insolvency act, as submitted by the Montreal board of trade, is not meeting with favor in the west. The Winnipeg board has declared against the proposed act, on several grounds. It is claimed that it is not suited to Manitoba and the Territories, on account of the sparse population here, greater distances, slower means of communication, expensive nature of proceedings under the proposed act, etc. The simple and inexpensive act which has been in force in Manitoba for some years, is held by the Winnipeg board to be superior to the proposed Dominion act, so far as this part of the country is concerned.

The Vancouver board of trade has also pronounced against the proposed act, as prepared by the Montreal board, for much the same reasons as those given by the Winnipeg board. The act, the Vancouver board says, "would supercede our present inexpensive and very effective method of administering the estates of insolvent debtors," while the expense of administering the proposed act, under the conditions prevailing in British Columbia, "would be so great as to leave but little for the creditors." The only advantages of the proposed act, in the opinion of the Vancouver board, "would be the obtaining of his discharge by an insolvent debtor; the inflictment of punishment upon fraudulent debtors; and compulsory assignment in cases where a debtor refused to make a voluntary assignment." The latter, however, the Vancouver board believes is open to abuse, as it "could be made to operate harshly against deserving debtors who might be temporarily embarrassed.—Winnipeg Commercial.

CULTIVATING TRADE.

The manager, the bookkeeper, the cashier, the entry clerk, the shipping clerk, the salesman, the office boy, the porter—everyone, in fact, who is in any way connected with a business establishment should bear in mind that there is such a thing as cultivating trade, and that they, as well as the proprietors, are responsible for a share of the firm's success. Because a man is hired to fill a certain position there should be no excuse for his hesitating to do any other work which may require attention. A bookkeeper might soil his fingers by reason of stepping outside the office and waiting upon a customer if occasion required, but he would not lower himself in the estimation of his employer through thus signifying a willingness to make himself generally useful, and anyhow the dirt will wash off. To make a business grow and make it pay should be the main object of every employe, regardless of position or conditions. The day is gone when business can be conducted successfully without the undivided and best efforts of those who are responsible for it. In days gone by a merchant might succeed in a measure by sitting down and waiting for trade to come to him, but not now. In our day and generation the most persistent and systematic efforts are essential in bringing about a satisfactory result. A progressive spirit and a capacity for pleasing customers will work wonders in any business.—The Bookkeeper.