

PROSPECT FOR SALMON PRICES.

The London *Graphic* is one of the most conservative of contemporary commercial publications. Nothing of a sensational nature affecting natural products, or manufactured goods from California and the Pacific coast is ever allowed to appear in its columns without the closest and most painstaking investigations, and by the time of its publication by our contemporary the noise of the sensation itself is about its ears. In a word, our contemporary keeps very close to facts, and seldom if ever indulges in a forecast of the market.

The above comment is called forth by the recent publication by our contemporary of the paragraph following:

"As to the salmon situation, it may be observed that it has been greatly improved by holders, the most influential of whom have resolutely kept back supplies until no fish was to be had in any quantity, except at an enhancement in value, which has been equal to 3s. per case from the lowest point last year, and sales of special shipments by public auction having been discontinued, those concluded privately have been marked by greater facility than heretofore. The prolonged depression of the former season having entailed severe losses, importers have determined to make a stand, and have hit upon the busiest period of the year—the warm summer months, when consumption is at its best—for the raising of their pretensions. Various opinions have been expressed with respect to the pack for 1892-93, but nothing definite is yet known beyond the supposed fact that it will be lighter than in 1891-92, and that canners and consignors of the article wish it to be understood that they will rather give up the business than again face the unprofitable results which attached to it in 1890-91; but, considering that there was a total pack of between 1,580,000 cases and 1,715,000 cases in the years 1890-91, the deficiency in the consignments this year would have to be almost alarming, with existing preponderating stocks, to create a sudden and sharp upward movement in the market quotations here."

While we are disposed in the main to applaud the course of our able and esteemed contemporary, we are of the opinion that in such a situation as is presented to-day, any publication in the United Kingdom might safely forewarn the trade of the absolute certainty of a very material shortage in the salmon pack of the Pacific coast for this year. It is a matter of record that the Alaska salmon pack will be reduced to 400,000 cases by the combination of cannery interests in the far northern waters. The pack of the famous brands of Columbia River (Chinook) salmon will not exceed 250,000 cases. Just what the British Columbia pack will be is not definitely known. The season on the British Columbia streams is later than on ours, but the same conservative policy pervades the industry there that is seen in its branches on the Columbia River and in Alaska. We may have a pack of a million cases this year, but it is more likely not to exceed 650,000 cases.

In several years past, we have averaged over a million and a half cases. Last year, the pack was approximated at 1,500,000. In 1891, it was about the same quantity;

in 1890, the pack was 1,023,000 cases; and, in 1889, it was 1,714,000 cases. England has required since 1893 fully 600,000 cases of our Pacific coast pack every year. Such a requirement this year would make an evident shortage in the home supply. The United States requires for an average consumption fully 50,000 cases a month. It is easily seen from these data that somewhere there must be a shortage in salmon this year, and, in some markets, prices must show the effects which always are occasioned by a shortage in the supply of any staple food product. We are of the opinion that our contemporary may safely say something more nearly representing the true situation than that which has been said in the paragraph given above without subjecting itself to the charge of sensationalism.—*S. F. Herald of Trade.*

COMMERCIAL DRIFT.

"Whither are we drifting?" may be asked with respect to many branches of trade to-day. Merchants universally look back to the old times when profits were good, expenses small, losses few and money was made. This, they say, is all changed nowadays; profits—well, they are infinitesimal. And, as profits have decreased, expenses have increased, and above and beyond all this there is the constant worry, the continual drive, the unremitting strain, and, at the end of the year, what is the result? Lucky if the position of a year ago has been maintained. Is this true? Let anyone ask one of the old commercial travellers, and he will soon find out what a change has taken place. Formerly two visits to each place in six months, and good orders for a three-months' supply each time; now, any place of consequence has to be visited every few weeks, and orders are small bills for immediate use. Then, look at the immense increase in the number of travellers—swarms of them—and the increased expense is easily accounted for. What is to be the result? It is very hard to say. "There are too many people in business," one of our most talented bank managers tell us, and he goes on to describe a movement which is going on in Canada, and which is very marked. "Small villages complain that their business is going to the larger towns, and the towns complain of the cities. Small manufacturers complain of the consolidations and so called monopolies. Retail shopkeepers complain of the great establishments where almost anything can be bought. These changes," he says, "are part of the great centralization in commerce, which is one of the most prominent developments of the last decade or two." There can be no doubt that these statements are absolutely correct, and that while the present excessive competition for the present limited market continues, no profits can be made at all commensurate with the capital employed or the energy expended in carrying on commercial enterprises. The centralization spoken of will, no doubt, continue, the number of hours will probably decrease, and the largest one will ultimately be successful. This, of course, will not come to pass in a day, but men will not continue always to waste their lives with no good result; many will follow the advice of the

bank manager we have already quoted by "turning to some industry in which there is not over-production." Then, when supply and demand are brought to an equal level, commercial "life will be worth living" once again.—*The Shareholder.*

A TACOMA SCHEME.

The Tacoma *Ledger* has recently been printing some articles on "Our Insurance Rates." Referring to the matter, a well-known resident of that city, in a letter to the paper, suggests the following scheme for securing lower rates:—

Let property owners combine and form a "Mutual Protection From Fire" association. Let each member place a portion of his insurance with the association, paying a rate to be agreed upon, as, for instance, say a merchant carries \$40,000 insurance, he gives \$5,000 of that amount to the association, reserving sufficient in recognized companies to maintain his credit. One hundred such risks, at say 1½ per cent., would give the association \$7,500 in premiums to start with. The second year, carrying the same risks, the fund would be augmented by another \$7,500, increasing it to \$15,000, to which would be added the accretion of new risks. The expense of working need be but slight. The third year, with the original 100 members, the fund would reach \$22,500, less expenses and plus additional premiums. And so on. Now for losses. Our fire equipment and the quality of the buildings being erected within our fire limits place us on a footing equaling in protection the largest cities; but say that our losses would amount to 3 per cent. That would mean a loss of \$2,500 the first year. But, to insure against emergencies, the by-laws of the association might provide that only a percentage of loss be paid at the start, as, for instance, first year, 20 per cent.; second year, 40 per cent.; third year, 60 per cent.; fourth year, 80 per cent.; and after the fifth year, the full insurance. Only extraordinary disasters would now remove the association from a firm footing, and, as it improved in magnitude and stability, it would come to be recognized as a secure institution, and members could insure in it as much as it cared to take.

The advantages would not be felt at first, since the members would not get full indemnity in case of fire, but, later, they would not only get their insurance at a lower rate, with full indemnity, but would also have an interest in the funds of the association to the extent of the premiums they had paid in. It should be thoroughly understood that the idea is not to form a "home company," but merely to make a combination of property owners, having for its object the lessening of insurance rates and the ultimate retention in Tacoma of the immense amount of money annually paid out to eastern and foreign companies. Also, it should be remarked that members would not be individually responsible for losses. Payment would be made from the funds of the association on the basis laid down.

I have interviewed several merchants on the subject, and found them generally favorably disposed toward it, and if property owners think well enough of the scheme to give it an hour's time, a meeting could be arranged at which it could be thoroughly discussed and entered into more in detail.