

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 tradesmen in the east end of Toronto (across the Don) have commenced a Wednesday halt holiday movement of their own, and on Wednesday of last week a large number of grocers and butchers were closed for the afternoon. There are some who have not yet fallen in line, but it is probable they will be found in the ranks very shortly. Let us hope that success will reward their efforts and that the movement will grow, cross the classic Don and extend to the westerly limits of the city.

That "there is many a slip between the cup and the lip" appears likely to be illustrated in the upshot of the agreement between the wholesale and retail associations of this city as to the trade discounts on starch. That agreement a fortnight ago seemed to lack nothing but formal declaration on the part of the Guild. It lacks more than that now, for it seems as if its most important concessions would be disallowed. It is understood that the one dissenting local Guild is that of Quebec, which is reported to take exception to every clause but that specifying the discount on 50-box lots. Ten-box lots and twenty-five box lots are the ones that it most concerns the average grocer to have

discounts upon. The fifty-box lot is a concession not to the average trader but to the would-be jobber or intending price-cutter. The grocer with the ordinary prospect of a direct consumptive demand before him will seldom buy in 50-box lots. The agreement with only this concession left in it would be emasculated.

The long time that has elapsed between the meeting of the conference and the announcing of the partial result so far reached, does not tend to inspire confidence in the consideration which the Guild is supposed to have for the retail trade. Disappointment is not the result which is most likely to convince the trade that a temporizing policy has not been pursued. The suspense in which retailers have been kept since the conference seems to have been unnecessarily prolonged, and is very worrying. It is enough that uncertainty as to the sugar tariff should keep the grocers for months in a state of exasperating hesitation, without the addition of vexations incident to the long-pending starch discounts. Traders do not buy enough starch to last them over the immediate present, and are bothered making several orders for a quantity of starch that in a settled state of the market would be bought in one order.

If the concession as to the sugar discounts were not tied to the problematical question of the sugar duty, and were either fully granted or definitely refused, there would perhaps be more patience on the part of the trade to wait for the settlement of the starch discounts. But as everything is yet in statu quo there is nothing to make the trade feel at all sanguine. The sugar trade is doubly complicated, however, and if the discount on ten barrel lots were unreservedly granted it is unlikely there would be much freer buying before the determination of the duty. There is therefore not so much inconvenience in the delay in deciding about the sugar dis-

counts as in deciding about the starch discounts. The only thing is, that since neither have yet been granted, there is a feeling of mistrust that either will be.

The fact that the agreement seems to have been wholly approved by every local Guild but one makes its mere partial adoption look unreasonable. The Dominion Guild it appears, adopts only what has the support of all the local Guilds. This looks like taking action only upon a unanimous vote, whereas it is taking action upon the minority vote. In the case where the minority vote is the smallest it can be, as it is said to be in the present instance, the Dominion Guild is really ruled by one of its constituent parts. It is not a unanimous vote where the decision of five is reversed by one.

The decision of the Retail Grocers' Association of this city, to await further advice from the Guild before proceeding by any other course to obtain the concessions sought, was well advised. To have recourse to the manufacturers before it was quite clear that nothing could be gained by waiting a little longer on the Guild, might prejudice the chances of gaining their end either way. It is more dignified, as well as more prudent, to give sufficient time. That the Toronto wholesale grocers were acting in good faith, and were willing to do what they assented to at the conference, is plain from the fact that many of them have lately been selling starch subject to the unsettled discounts. Mr. Gibson spoke truly at the last meeting, as Mr. White had done at the meeting before, when he said that the tendency of the fifty-box concession was to insert a wedge of discord into every retail grocers' association in the country, dividing it into two classes of grocers, with widely divergent interests. Only the truth of that remark should have been as fully recognised and admitted when Mr. White made it a month ago.