

20 to 17½ per cent., and that on sole leather from 15 per cent. ad. val. and ½ cent per lb. spec. to 15 per cent. ad. val. only (resulting in the importation of quantities of leather from the United States at panic prices) did certainly not tend to improve matters with the tanning trade of Canada.

Business fluctuated from spring until about August, when it improved somewhat. The fall months and the balance of the year were characterized by a considerably firmer feeling, although great difficulty was experienced in obtaining advances on prices, owing chiefly to the lack of animation in trade generally. Advances actually obtained were most reluctantly paid. The buying was largely for immediate requirements only. The call during the greater part of the year was for the cheaper grades of nearly all descriptions, the better selections having been comparatively neglected.

Of the hide market, it may be said that although prices ruled somewhat low up to about July, they began to advance in August; the prices since then have been stoutly maintained, and, in fact, largely increased, closing in December with meagre offerings, a strong and excited market, and with values away beyond the proportionate prices of leather. The advance on hides from the mid-summer prices was from 30 (thirty) to 50 (fifty) per cent., whereas leather has barely advanced more than an average of 5 (five) per cent. This, from the tanner's standpoint, desperate state of affairs, was one of the causes of the formation of the tanner's branch, giving them more frequent opportunity to meet together to discuss, and, as far as possible, remedy this unfortunate condition, by intelligent and concerted action in the buying of raw material and disposing of the finished product. How soon the desired ends may be accomplished remains to be seen. One thing, however, seems certain, viz., that, even if the much desired improvement be attained, an era of small profits for tanners has set in. It seems to have "come to stay." The volume of business must make up for the reduced margin. Modern and improved, but expensive, machinery, equipments and methods must take the place of the older ones. Concentration of thought and energy to the production of fewer lines in each individual tannery seems also to be the order of the day.

The matter of hide inspection in the various centres, as also the adoption of a uniform system of bark measurement, are likely to receive the attention of this Section of the Board at an early date, as will also the important question of terms of credit.

One remarkable fact stands forth prominently in connection with the tanning trade of 1894, viz: Leather was cheaper (and hides also for a short time), than during any time within the last half century, or even longer.

A strong feature of the Canadian hide market has been that American buyers have, within the last six months, scoured the Dominion, shipping hides and skins to the United States from all points. In this somewhat indirect but unavoidable way, the tanning trade here was in the half year past unfavorably affected by the general improvement of trade in the United States.