

Between 1891 and 1896 the world's crops of wheat were in excess of 2,400,000,000 bushels each year, that for 1892 amounting to 2,410,960,000 bushels; in 1893, 2,474,080,000 bushels; in 1894, 2,562,000,000 bushels, and in 1895, 2,496,800,000 bushels. The falling off in the world's production of wheat during the year as compared with the crop year 1894 is 121,400,000 bushels. As compared with 1894, the decrease is 187,000,000 bushels, and compared with the total production in 1893 it is about 100,000,000 bushels smaller, while the corresponding decrease compared with the yield in 1892 is 35,000,000 bushels. The final estimates of the Russian wheat crop last year were larger than expected, but short crops in the Argentine, Australia, and in the United States and Canada, offset the apparent increase in Russia, and made the year's decrease in the output of wheat throughout the world nearly 122,000,000 bushels compared with 1895, fully as much as that estimated early in the crop year 1896-97.

Including totals of the world's production of wheat for the years 1888, 1889 and 1890 (278,070,000 quarters, 267,747,000 quarters and 283,155,000 quarters respectively), it appears that the world's present annual requirements of wheat are somewhere between 2,440,000,000 and 2,480,000,000 bushels, while the world's production in the past cereal year has been only 2,375,400,000 bushels. From this the inference is that the world's stocks of reserves of wheat have been reduced nearly 100,000,000 bushels in the past twelve months.

CASH OR CREDIT.

The present thorough discussion of the methods which have made the department stores successful has served to emphasize the importance of merchants placing their trade upon a cash basis, or at least to reduce credit within the narrowest limits. The *Maritime Merchant* reports a Halifax dry goods trader as having stated that there was no difficulty in adopting cash methods, provided the merchants "had back-bone enough to carry out the proposition in its entirety. On the assumption that 30 days is equivalent to cash, or is a means towards attaining such a desirable basis, firmness and promptness in sending out and collecting the bills would seem to be one of the strongest levers that can be used to gain the desired end. The great evil of a large portion of the retail dry goods trade in Halifax, is caused by the six months credit system which has been so prominent a feature of the business in the past. If merchants who are tied down by the existence of such a custom, would but make an effort, steady and persistent in reducing this long term, it would not take a great while to educate the customers that the short time or spot cash method was the most satisfactory in the long run. As it is at present, when the long-term system is in vogue, a customer looks upon the receipt of a bill in the light of an impertinence, and if the amount is at all large the dealer stands a chance of offending a person who owes him, and every one knows that it is very much easier to offend a customer who is largely indebted to you than the cash buyer."

HEALTHFUL CANNED FISH.

A letter has been written by Mr. C. Wood to the *Globe*, London, Eng., describing in severe language abuses which he claims exist in the preparation of fish by the British Columbia salmon packers. Mr. Wood claims that "the fish are stacked like hay, and corruption sets in long before the canning takes place. Not only that, either, but the cleaning is performed in foul water, full of decaying offal." The *Globe*, in an editorial comment on the letter, says: "It is with much regret that we feel called upon to give this warning, calculated as it is to seriously injure a British colony. But the number of deaths traced directly to the consumption of canned fish would render it almost criminal to keep back disclosures which, if found to be true, trace this mysterious mortality to the fountain head."

The canning interests allowed little delay in answering this charge. Mr. Robert Ward, who was then in London, wrote to the *Globe* at considerable length, pointing out that Mr. Wood's conclusions, drawn from his experience with a single cannery, were very unfair to the great majority of the canners, who performed their work honestly and well, at the same time stating that in an experience dating back to the inception of the industry, he had never witnessed such "a dreadful state of affairs" as outlined by Mr. Wood: "As a popular article of food," writes Mr. Ward, "canned salmon would never have reached its present importance in the trade if such hideous dangers beset the consumption of many millions of cans annually; dangers, if any, that are well guarded against, in common with other food products. While, therefore, your correspondent might be anxious to reform an industry which many years' experience has built up to its present status, the true position of it is neither likely to be gauged by mere casual observation, nor by the wholesale and unwarranted condemnation of an important section of the community, interested in its honest development."

Recent decisions in the English courts as to poisoning occasioned by canned fish, and the comments of the press upon the matter, have naturally aroused considerable suspicion in the United Kingdom that there is something wrong in the methods followed by the salmon canners of the Pacific Coast. The matter is one which will bear the investigation of the Government. The British Columbia canners should, in packing salmon, take every precaution to make the fish sound and healthful food. We are convinced that the majority of the canners already follow such methods, but if there are isolated instances of canneries that prepare the fish in the way Mr. Wood has described, then the whole industry is in peril. There is a danger that if British Columbia canned fish were subjected to Government inspection, the additional expense would handicap the Canadian canners in their competition with the canners of the United States. But food bearing the stamp of a Government guarantee as to its purity, should readily command a higher price in export markets.

IN SPRING ATTIRE.

This is about the time, says the "Wide Awake Retailer" in the *Economist*, for the removal of storm doors and putting awnings in order. It is like throwing aside the store's winter wraps and getting its summer suit ready for use. Have you ever noticed what a difference these things make in the appearance of the store? It is more emphatic than the song of the first robin in announcing that spring is here. It seems almost of sufficient importance to be marked as an especial event in the season's business, and to call for some extra attention. This much can certainly be done by every merchant—he can so rearrange the goods and departments near the entrance that they will present a newer, brighter and more attractive appearance than they ever did before. Then customers, who are not at all slow to notice things, having their attention called to the fact that the store is literally thrown open for summer business, will be further impressed by its improved appearance.

THE WHEAT MARKET.

Wheat values have declined about two cents per bushel, as compared with last week's quotations. The export markets offer little encouragement to holders of wheat. Although the newspapers continue to report a war cloud threatening the peace of Europe, war news has had no stimulating effect upon the grain markets. The friends of wheat have apparently lost faith in that staple. The statistics, which show a shortage in the crops, have every appearance of turning out long, in view of a decline in the consumption of both Europe and America. The immense increase in the European imports of meats, especially from Australia and New Zealand, has naturally affected the consumption of other products. The population of the different European countries, to which these vast quantities of meat have been shipped, has not increased in proportion to the larger imports of food products. With a comparatively staple demand and an increased supply of food, there has been but one outcome, a surplus, and this has shown itself in the neglect of the wheat markets.

SUGAR PRICES.

At the close of last week, the sugar market, which had gradually been gaining strength for some days, resulted in an advance of values. In both yellows and granulated, quotations were advanced $\frac{1}{2}$ cent per lb. The Montreal factory price is now $4\frac{1}{2}$ cents for granulated, and $3\frac{3}{4}$ cents for yellows. The Maritime Province market was subject to the same upward movement. So soon as the advance was announced, retailers indicated their willingness to place orders, but the slight flurry in the street soon passed away and little anxiety is now shown by the trade to secure sugar supplies. Refiners claim that the market is a strong one, and say they are not willing to book free orders at present rates. Latest advices from London indicate an important decline in beet root sugar in London, or of fully $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. on this and $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. on next month. This is believed to have resulted from the report that the increased bounty law in France had passed, and in consequence larger supplies are coming on offer.

FOR GROCERS AND PROVISION DEALERS.

The Furness line steamer "Halifax City" carried more than 10,000 barrels of Canadian apples to London.

The shareholders in the St. Lawrence Sugar Refining Company, held their annual meeting last week in Montreal. The former board of directors was re-elected as follows: Messrs. A. Baumgarten, Theodore Labatt, E. A. Reincke, Robert Hampson, James Crathern and J. M. Douglas. Mr. A. Baumgarten was re-elected to the presidency, and Mr. Labatt to the vice-presidency.