

GROCERIES

JOBBERS VS. BUYING DIRECT.

In our last issue reference was made to some talk at the recent annual meeting of the Atlanta Retail Merchants' Association about alleged discriminations on the part of the jobbing trade, excessive prices, etc., and about the possibility of a local buyers' exchange in the near future.

The following significant editorial from The Grocery World, of Philadelphia, has an Atlanta string to it, apparently:

Secretary John A. Green, of the National Retail Grocers' Association, sings a happy song of satisfaction in his correspondence this week over the fact, as he expresses it, that "It is very satisfactory to note, at the present time, the conditions existing between the retailers and wholesalers of the United States."

Secretary Green chants a beautiful word picture of the wholesaler and the retailer lying down in peace together. "True," he says, indifferently, "buying exchanges have sprung up in different parts of the country." He adds that in most instances this has been brought about by a spirit of unfairness by both, but very often by the wholesaler disregarding the rights of the retailer.

The opinion of the national secretary is scarcely convincing to those familiar with the fact that the Wholesale Grocers' Association of Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware, abetted by the National Wholesale Grocers' Association, is at present engaged in the most cold-blooded selfish attack upon the interest of organized retailers ever conceived in this country. The jobbers have set out to enforce the principle that no retailer or set of retailers can buy of a manufacturer, but must in every case pay the second middleman's profit, even though that middleman's normal purchasing power is one-tenth that of the retailer or set of retailers. In other words, the retailer must for all time be saddled with the jobber's keep, not because in many cases the jobber is of any use, but because his name being "jobber" he should monopolize the right to buy of the manufacturer.

Secretary Green also says that the jobber has recognized the retailer's exclusive right to the retail field and has nobly withdrawn therefrom. Read the following from a letter sent the Grocery World during the week by a large retailer of Atlanta, Ga.:

"You are, no doubt, more or less familiar with the conditions existing in the South, and know that for at least the past few years a very earnest effort has been made to have the retailers and wholesalers work in harmony, to have the wholesaler desist from his policy of selling direct to the consumer at the same price that he supplies the retailer, and also to have the wholesaler supply the retailer at the same price that he sells the cut-price chain stores or department houses. The efforts made to accomplish these results have been anything but satisfactory, although a large number of the job-

bers have made an earnest effort to make the plan mutually beneficial. I am inclined to believe that these parties have now come to the parting of the roads, and that quite a number of the leading retail grocers of Atlanta will join together in buying their supplies direct."

All of which would seem to show that Mr. Green's little song is out of tune.

CIGARS KEPT FRESH.

"Yes, sir; cigars require care to keep them fresh," said a wholesale cigar dealer. "If goods are kept in warehouses where there is heat they are bound to dry out more or less, although they may be sealed virtually air-tight in the individual boxes. Steam heat is the hardest on cigars. If left exposed at all they dry out very quickly and lose very much of their flavor. In the big warehouses where large quantities of cigars are stored the jobbers have 'humidors' installed. They are simply water containers of one style or another arranged so that the water is open to the air for evaporation. The presence of the water prevents the air from getting too dry for the cigars. Even in the big show cases in the jobbers' sales-rooms the same precaution is taken to prevent the stock from drying out. Moisture made by placing water-soaked pads in tin-lined wooden boxes are placed in the compartments with the boxes of cigars. The careful retailer is just as particular with his cigars and keeps a soaked sponge or some sort of moistener in his show case with his goods.

"A brick thoroughly water-soaked is good to put into a show case with cigars. The brick is so porous that it will soak up nearly its own bulk in water. When a soaked brick is placed in a show case the water within it evaporates slowly, just enough to keep the cigars soft.

"If cigars are packed in good tight boxes they will retain their flavor. And the flavor of good cigars comes from the tobacco alone. It is a mistake to think that anything else is used to enhance or qualify the flavor of first-class tobaccos. It's only poor cigars that are 'doctored.'

"How? Well, with drugs or chemicals. The poor qualities of tobacco used in making cheap cigars haven't much flavor, so very often the manufacturer provides an artificial flavor with various drugs. They treat them so they give forth the odor of good tobacco, too. If you're a smoker you've probably picked up an inexpensive cigar that smelled as if it were made of the best of tobacco. When you smoked it you found it contained short 'filler' and sadly lacked the smoking qualities of a cigar made from good tobacco. That was a 'doctored' cigar. Often cheap cigars look as if they had a glaze on the wrapper and when placed in the mouth the smoker detects a sweetish flavor. These are evidences of drugs. As far as I ever heard the drugs are all perfectly harmless.

"Nearly all cheap cigars are made of short filler, that is the inside of the cigar is composed of broken bits of tobacco leaves. Only the wrapper and bladder are of large perfect leaves. In the cheap grade of the Spanish and Cuban made cigars there is no binder. The small bits are simply enclosed in the single outside wrapper."

SUPERIORITY (?) OF NEAR-MAPLE SYRUP.

Nature herself can not equal the purity of a brand boiled out of wood was the testimony given by an expert chemist in a suit at Cleveland, where a syrup company was the defendant in a suit brought under the pure food laws of Ohio. The chemist was summoned as an expert, and testified that there was more danger in the use of what is commercially pure maple syrup than in the near-maple product.

The near-syrup and near-sugar brought into court exhibited all the symptoms of being the real things. But that's where the lay mind goes astray. They're not. They're a good deal better, said the expert. One's faith in nature is shaken by the expose of her duplicity, so far as maple sugar goes.

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In the first place, nature is by no means constant in the way she manufactures her product. The purity of the maple sap depends a good deal upon the character of the soil where the tree grows, and also upon the time of the year the tree is tapped, it was testified. But under the most favorable conditions, said the witness, nature is prone to pack her maple products full of ashes, or ash, rather, to use the technical expression of the expert. Ash is scientific for salts free from water.

Food experts say that almost every food produced by nature is more or less poisonous. Ash, it seems, is the poisonous ingredient in natural maple products. Where the near-maple beats the real article, the expert testified, is that it contains a minimum of ash, much less than nature is in the habit of putting into maple sugar. Thus the imitation is the more wholesome, he declared.

It was testified that the chemical ingredients of the near and the real are precisely the same. True, in the counterfeit article a trace more chlorine was found than in the genuine. But the proportion of chlorine is no greater than that contained in ordinary city hydrant water, said Dr. Spenser, the expert chemist. Moreover, no difference in taste or smell can be detected between the two products.

Mr. Scanlon testified that he makes the syrup by steaming maple wood cut during the maple season. To the substance obtained he adds sucrose, ordinary granulated sugar, and water.

A CRISIS IN TEA PRICES.

The advance in tea prices during the past couple of years is a subject of more than ordinary interest to ever retail grocer. The Canadian Grocer of Toronto, Canada, reviews the causes which have succeeded in forcing the prices of this commodity up to their present level, and says:

With the steady, though gradual, advance in the price of teas in the world's markets during

the past year, which have been noted from week to week the situation, as it stands at present, is critical and is exceedingly interesting to the retail grocer. Speaking generally, the prices of teas today are higher and materially so, than they have been at any time since 1899.

In common teas the difference in prices between January, 1906, and those quoted at present, show an appreciation of fully 100 per cent. The advances have been most noticeable on the lower grades of Indians and Ceylons. As an instance, common teas, which were quoted in the primary markets last year at 4 pence, can not now be bought for less than 8 pence.

This means that while retailers were buying common teas for 16 and 18 cents last year, they are now paying 21 and 22 cents for the same goods. In most cases the consumer is getting teas at the same price as a year ago. Who is losing?

Various reasons are quoted for these advances, but getting to the bottom of the matter the real reason seems to be that demand is increasing faster than production. Great Britain and the continent of America have largely increased their consumption in the last two years, and another most important factor, Russia, is becoming a great tea buyer. Returns up to November show that Russia's purchases of Ceylon and Indian in 1907 were fully 50 per cent larger than in 1906. In the lowest grades the purchase of 1906 have been almost trebled. Last year Russia took practically the whole crop of the Chinese teas, even at the enormously high prices, and this growing business seems bound to extend.

Keeping this situation in view, it seems that in all probability there will be no immediate

relief from the present high prices. They may go still higher, and, in any event will remain at their present level for some months at least. Indeed, the opinion is expressed by some London firms who are usually conservative in their remarks, that no level can be expected for several years.

We must, therefore, consider, whatever fluctuations may occur, that a high level of price has been established on a permanent basis, and, according to this, the only relief to the wholesale and retail dealers will come from the establishment of a higher scale of retail prices.

The packers of tea whose selling price has been fixed, but whose cost has increased as the market advanced, have been doing business at a serious loss for some time past. This condition can not be continued indefinitely.

Again, in Japans, which are not put up in packets, the profit to wholesaler and retailer alike, has been reduced to a minimum in the effort to maintain the same price to the consumer, and this also can not go on very long. With these matters in view, retail dealers will see that in their own interests they must be prepared to establish a higher retail price.

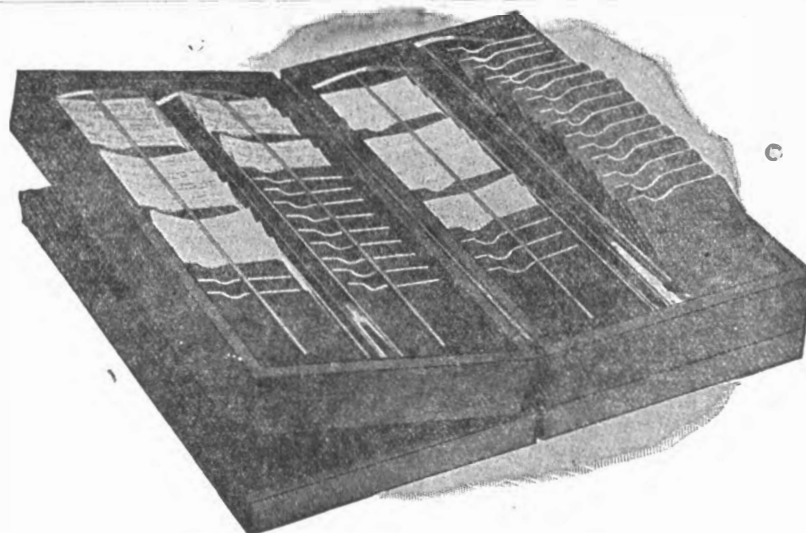
The fact that the advance has been greatest on the lower grades of teas makes these grades relatively poor value and the retailer will be really giving the consumer better value for the money, and, at the same time, reaping a much better profit for himself by inducing his customers to buy higher priced goods. This will be true in even greater degree if the retail price of the lower grades is advanced from the present standard of 25 cents to 30 cents, as every cent additional paid in the first cost brings a tea intrinsically worth several cents more in actual drinking quality.



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