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& 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 statement made in these columns a fortnight ago, that "it seems to be the case that there are fewer failures among members of associations than among non-members," is not only questioned but is contradicted by the Philadelphia Cash Grocer. Our contemporary is good enough to see in the phrase "it seems" a sort of rear-guard upon which we can retire if we find our general position untenable. We are not yet convinced, however, that we have advanced too far. We believed what we said, and believe it still, but as we had not the whole field of observation under our eye, we left the proposition in the dependent form. So far as Canadian experience goes the statement is in accordance with the facts. It is based upon the weekly reports of the commercial agencies which had been watched a long time before the statement was ventured. And while it is in accordance with facts, it is also in accordance with reason. The statement, within the limits of Canadian experience, is not more anomalous than untrue.

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There is abundant proof in the records of associations, as well as in the actual circumstances of business, that radical reforms in methods and conditions of trade have been

effected through the agency of associations. And there is no direction a trade reform can take so as not to have a bearing upon solvency. Anything that tends to soften the asperities of competition is of economical value, and if association effort bears no other fruit than to make rival grocers friendly, it is of commercial service to them. Which is the stand-point that a man in any department of activity is going to make the more progress from: that of jealous isolation from his peers, or that of friendly, frictionless inter-communion with them? Undoubtedly the latter is the relation that it best pays a trader to stand in towards his fellows. It does him more good to be in such a relation to them. It enlarges the nature of the man to share in and contribute to the community of opinion that the traders of his class and locality can fund in an association. "Brethren in council but rivals in the field" are live men in business or any other kind of competition.

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Even if the statement that associations are nurseries of solvency were developed merely from the theoretic aims and objects of associations, and not from their practical results, the counter-statement of the Cash Grocer would scarcely dispose us to let go of it as an opinion. Undoubtedly association men ought to be able as a rule to avoid the pitfalls of business more than non-association men do. One reason for this opinion is given in the preceding paragraph. Another is, that associations are not made up of so diverse elements as the non-associated trade is. Associations are not only collections; they are also selections. That is to say, those who join associations are a pretty safe class of traders. Their joining of the association is only one evidence among many that their course affords of business sagacity. They join the association as they sell or buy their goods, as they meet their

payments, and perform their other business functions. It is one of the steps by which they show their rank as business men, and a body made up of select men ought to show a higher average of success in the struggle to keep solvent than a heterogeneous body. The man who means to cut does not join as a rule. It is also manifest that those who stand out of an association are at the disadvantage of competing against the solid body as a whole. The many against one contest is in favor of the association people.

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The Cash Grocer seems to think that its dissent from our statement calls for a defence of its friendship towards associations, and unless the trade of Philadelphia is peculiar, it would seem as if our contemporary had little warrant for throwing this bucket of cold water upon the idea of organization among grocers. If organization does not promote, directly or indirectly, the financial well being of the trade, what good does it do? That is the end toward which all benefits tend, and if it does not further that then it does no good. Hence there is nothing in them to merit the friendship of the Cash Grocer or of anybody else, if associations fail in the respect wherein our contemporary says they do. Why therefore does that paper refrain from condemning as altogether vain and useless the whole association idea? It declares itself friendly to associations, though it denies that they realize the one end for which they were called into existence. Or, if it admits that grocers' associations benefit the retailer in any respect, it cancels its own assertion that there are as many of its members fail as there are of other grocers. It should go the whole hog or none. Associations are good or bad; they are not indifferent. If the Cash Grocer had said they were indifferent, it would have wound up its comments more consistently, though not more justly than it did. To say they are useless but praiseworthy is nonsense.