

THE CANADIAN GROCER

& GENERAL STOREKEEPER

PUBLISHED WEEKLY.
\$200 PER YEAR

Published in the interest of Grocers, Packers, Produce and Provision Dealers
and General Storekeepers.

Vol. VI.

TORONTO, JANUARY 15, 1892.

No. 3

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THE J. B. McLEAN PUBLISHING COMPANY
FINE MAGAZINE PRINTERS
AND
TRADE JOURNAL PUBLISHERS.

HEAD OFFICE: 6 Wellington West, Toronto.

MONTREAL OFFICE: 115 St. Francois Xavier St.
G. Hector Clemes, Manager.

NEW YORK OFFICE: Room 105, Times Building,
Roy V. Somerville, Manager.

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.

There are some people who appear to believe that a great change will be wrought in the distributing system of the country by the Patrons of Industry. They have the idea that the mediators between the producer and the consumer will be abolished or reduced in number, and that the primary source of supply will be brought to closer relation with the ultimate demand. Such an opinion of the results of the present agitation to do away with profits is unwarranted. The agitation in question has no constructive object; all that its supporters now aim at is to destroy. They would destroy nine-tenths of the machinery of trade without a thought of the conditions that would be brought upon trade by such a step. They would be entirely unprepared to replace the present distributive apparatus, for the simple reason that they have not given thought to the matter, for if they had given thought to the matter they would leave well enough alone. A system cannot be founded in mere greed, and greed is the sole basis of the movement. In all times there have been large numbers of people who begrudge the living the trader makes. But these people could not devise a system of distribution that would take the

place of what we have to-day. The really thinking part of the community have nothing to do with the advocates of reforms that aim at the extinction of the trader. As we said before, the profits of the trade are looked upon by the covetous eyes of the merely greedy, and appeals to that grudging sentiment are frequently and successfully made by sharpers. A month or so ago in this city some adventurers started a consumers' association. They fleeced a few of the natural enemies of the traders and then retired. Their victims are the laughing stock of local retailers to-day.

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Do the Patrons of Industry ever look at any other function of the retailer but that which enables him to make a living out of his business? They evidently do not. The work that traders have done is easily contemplated, but there is a disinclination or an inability to regard the traders and that work as cause and effect. We have foreign markets to-day, we have a practically assured outlet for the produce raised by the farmer, we have normal prices, and we would not have had these things in anything like the same degree if merchants had not existed in the proportion in which we have had them. If there had not been enterprise and capital to hold what the producer raised and distribute what the consumer wanted, our condition as a people would have been a very crude one now. How is the single and isolated farmer going to dispose of his grain to single and isolated consumers thousands of miles away? The big operations that have been rendered possible by a mercantile system could not be transacted if the Patrons flourished everywhere and there were no independent traders. For business to be possible upon anything like ideal lines it is necessary that there shall be a body of capital not engaged in production. Distribution is a distinct operation, and it is neces-

sary that it be distinct, as without it the functions of production, and the resources of consumption would not be developed as they are to-day. Distribution has created a market in many cases where mere production could not. The merchants have helped to make the fields of the farmers profitable to them, because the local merchants are part of the distributive system through which the farmers' products find their way to distant consumers. Even the man who sells future wheat when he has not a bushel in possession or under contract, benefits the farmer, for his enterprise is a vehicle of business between the farmer and somebody else. The immense part played by the merchants in building up the commerce which figures up so high in our export and import returns, ought to be thought of when the Patrons suggest that the capital of the merchants shall not be free to expand or shrink under the unfettered direction of the merchant.

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If the Patrons succeed in grafting their organization for a year or two upon the social system of the country, they will begin to realize how helpless they are. They will perceive that the mechanism of trade is a necessary thing even for the accomplishment of their own selfish ends. Already there are symptoms of a reactionary movement upon the dial of progress in districts where the Patrons have obtained a foothold. The movement to do away with toll gates and market fees, that has in recent years been gaining ground in the growing towns and cities, has been arrested wherever the Patrons are strong. This movement has had for its enlightened object the freeing of trade from all local restrictions, that business may be facilitated between the farmers and the city and town people. But in Hamilton, for instance, the disposition among business men to unite to get these municipal taxes thrown off has been chilled by the growth of a Patron sentiment in the surrounding country. Merchants do not feel like exerting themselves for the enfranchisement of trade that is going to only one or two of their number. This is one evidence of the way the Patrons will help along progress. There will be plenty of evidence in actual decay if the Patrons once become supreme.