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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 common good of the local trade is what associations of grocers are formed to secure in as high a degree as possible. One principle of great value as a means to this end, and one generally neglected by associations of all sorts, is that of self-reform. The ambition to set everything else right is not wanting, and the critical faculty which opens our eyes to the faults of others is more often over-than underworked. A little introspectiveness is as good for associations as for individuals. It is capable of more than is any amount of vigilance exercised for the improvement of other people and institutions. In the fields of religion and morality there are thousands of workers grouped together into special associations for the benefit of other people: to teach those other people to lead godly lives, to put an end to their intemperance, to make thrifty people of themselves. And these benevolent associations very often do not accomplish what they aim at, and they go to pieces, because of conspicuous and objectionable faults among themselves, that destroy their influence for good among others. It must be the same with trade associations: they can be most effective as a means of clearing away obstacles

that confront the trade from the outside, if they first give their attention to those on the inside.

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There is a suggestion in the words, "Physician, heal thyself," that deserves to be pondered by all associations. Attention was called to it at the last meeting of the Toronto Association, and the general sense of the meeting was plainly in favor of applying the principle in one or two matters. The reckless and ruinous competition that members of associations wage with each other in the largest part of their trade—that of sugar selling—is a more mischievous thing than any evil that associations have tried to overcome among non-retailers. It is worse than free peddling rights, it is worse than excessive combine prices among wholesalers, it is worse than the bankrupt stocks evil. These do not tend to impoverish or circumscribe grocers so much as does the excess of sugar competition, and grocers generally are slaves to that irrational and unjustifiable excess. Associations ought to use their influence more than they have done to put a stop to it. The utter foolishness of the practice of selling sugar without a profit was never so well illustrated as it is just now. There is a lack of sugar, it is hard to get enough to keep going, the refiners are far in arrears with their orders. Yet there are retailers selling sugar at prices that make it seem to be a drug on the market. The enormous increase in sugar consumption which the removal of the duty has caused, the instant need for sugar which the abundance of the fruit is causing; these have caused a shortage in the supply, but they cannot check the price cutter. It is time that associations addressed themselves to that work.

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The Halifax Association made uniform prices on sugar a plank in its platform when the duty was removed. It is true that a

mighty hubbub was made. The newspapers of the city published editorials against combines, and columns of interviews and reports that made public opinion appear to be at fever heat were put under startling headings and explosive sub-heads. It is true also that a co-operative store was at once opened, from which sugar was shovelled out at 20 lbs. of granulated for a dollar, as against 17 lbs. agreed on by the Association. And that store found immense sale for its cheap sugar. Something of a panic struck the Association, and some of its members advised the surrender of uniform prices, but so far the resolution embodying their adoption is not repealed, and the struggle goes on. It might be a good idea to have the resolution suspensive in such emergencies, so as to allow of a simultaneous opening of the sluice gates of the supply for the purpose of swamping such co-operative ventures by meeting them with their own prices for one good hot spell. Co-operative stores have not proved a success even when based on more substantial profits than such as are to be made by selling 20 lbs. of granulated sugar for \$1 these days.

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Other indications that the policy of self-reform is to be made more of by the Toronto Association are to be observed in certain notices of motion which are standing until next meeting. These are to provide for the appointing of a substitute to fill any office whose incumbent has been absent from the meetings without sufficient excuse for three consecutive months; to provide for the appointment of a sick visiting committee; and to provide for the giving of prizes for essays upon subjects whose discussion will be of service to the association. These are all purely applications of the self-reforming principle, and as such are gratifying signs of sound progress. No constitution ought to be without some provision for securing the