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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.

THIS WEEK'S MOTTO:

"It is better to have built a dog house than to have dreamed of building a palace."

The Patrons of Industry make a great deal of the plea that they are endeavoring to place the retail trade of the country upon a cash basis. This, they seem to think, ought to compensate the merchant for bargaining away a great part of his profit by entering into a contract with them. The Patrons are the men who can put trade upon a cash basis, if they are earnest in their efforts to do so. They are made up of the very class of people for whose sake trade was ever put upon a credit basis. If the Patrons, and all whom they aim to include in their organization, would pay cash for their goods, there would be nothing left of the credit system to reform. It is simply a matter of cessation on the part of the individuals included or sought to be included in the Patron movement. There is no need of sweeping away anybody or anything. Let the cash be produced, and before its magic influence the system and all its evils will vanish away.

That mode of settling the matter is beautifully simple, and is as natural as it is simple. It does not involve the expenses of association, neither does it call for boycotting or coercion, and prices will sag down under its gentle influence like the mercury of the barometer under atmospheric pressure.

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The beauty of such a solution is, that the diminution in prices it would cause would not be merely in one stratum of the distributing system, but would affect every grade of trader and producer. It would thus be something more than a sacrifice of retailers for the benefit of consumers. The losses of business would be reduced, the cost of trading—the items for bookkeeping, etc.—would be greatly lessened, all the retailers would be left in business, and their volume and weight would widen their margin as much towards the side of the wholesalers as it had shrunk on the side of the consumers. Cash, unhampered by any entanglements of association, would work out the price problem as completely as it would extinguish the credit problem. "Put money in thy purse," and the whole thing is as simple as adding one and one.

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Then the occupation of the agitator would be gone. That would be a good riddance for consumers, who are being made the mere tools of designing, self-seeking fomentors of discontent. There is no lot on this earth that is free from attendant difficulties and disappointments, and the man who wishes to play on the passions of any class of people need have only the knack of railing acceptably against things as they are, to make his hearers dissatisfied with everything outside of themselves. This is a poor business for a man to follow, but there are many who make a livelihood by it. They know how to draw a dark picture, how to make the yoke gall that was never felt before, and how to produce ge-

neral exasperation. A great part of the Patron force is due to the incendiary addresses of these men.

* * *

Where there are more than two traders in a place that a Patron merchant is doing business in, it is to the interest of the free merchants to come to an agreement in regard to a few things. The Patron merchant is very commonly a general trader. If his opponents agree to a division of trade, each can take one line to sell at prices below those asked for that line by the Patron merchant. If two, or three, or four free stores thus league together they can attract even contracted custom, or can force the Patron merchant down to prices that will soon put him out of the struggle. He will have the brunt of the whole combined trade to meet, and he will pine away under the strain. If this general merchant sells his gray cottons near or at cost, that one sells his tea, another his canned goods, etc., in the same way, the loss will be divided up among several or concentrated upon the Patron merchant, whose inevitable collapse will be hastened by the alliance of his competitors.

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What evidence has the Patron that the invoice submitted for his inspection is the one relating to the particular goods he is shown? Here he must take the trader's word. So the bargains of the Patrons rest ultimately upon the verbal representations of the merchant. That is not a very satisfactory basis. The sense that it is not will be an increasing cause of distrust with the Patron, especially if he can get the same goods at lower prices from the merchants who are supposed to have joined hands to preserve their custom. Thus will wane the Patron support, and there is no need of any gift of prophecy to foretell the speedy decline of the trade system the Patrons are endeavoring to build up. There are some merchants now under contract with the Patrons, who openly say that they do not expect the order to last long, that they have given in temporarily to retain the custom of the Patrons until the latter go to pieces, and that when they do go to pieces their trade will still be attached to the store to which it is now contracted.