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& GENERAL STOREKEEPER

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J. B. McLEAN,
President.

HUGH O. McLEAN,
Sec.-Treas.

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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 Patrons of Industry have tried their political strength in Halton, a constituency which they were reasonably warranted in regarding as a stronghold. They have several lodges scattered among the townships of that county, a considerable number of prosperous and prominent farmers have been drawn into the Association and given it enthusiastic support. It was supposed that the numbers and agricultural wealth of the Patrons in Halton made them a stronger power there than in any other county. At the last bye-election they put a candidate in the field. He represented an undivided opposition to the former representative of the riding, and therefore would be naturally expected to enlist in his support all the elements of opposition to the Government candidate. He was not simply leading a wing of the opposition alongside of a great party nominee, but was running with the strong advantage of being the only candidate in the field against the late member. He would consequently get a large measure of support, not because he was a Patron, but because he was an opponent of the Government candidate. The Liberals might be expected to make a stout fight, as at his general election they were only 104 be-

hind, so that the Patron candidate had some signal advantages in his favor.

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But he did not win. He simply demonstrated that the power of his faction was not merely zero, but was a negative quantity of very considerable subtractive value. At the general election, a Liberal opposition, unadulterated with any Patron ingredients, was capable of coming within 104 of victory. At the recent bye election, the opposition was beaten by 444. That is, the opposition which centred round a Patron candidate was 340 short of that which centred round a purely Liberal candidate. The efforts of the Liberals would naturally be much stronger at this election than they were at last, as they had made a good stand before, had protested successfully, and had fair reasons for believing that they would come closer to, rather than fall further short of, victory. All this should make them struggle harder, and they would almost certainly have done better rather than worse than they did at the general election if they had not allied Liberalism with Patronism. If the opposition candidate had run on a purely Liberal ticket, he would have got all the support of the Liberal party and probably as many Patrons as the defeated candidate got. But the Liberals would not all go out to vote for a Patron candidate. Hence the Patrons in Halton are a factor that diminishes instead of increasing the strength of the Liberal party there.

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The political platform of the Patrons must be considered, along with their theory of trade, to show what headway they are likely to make in attracting members. Their political profession of faith includes some propositions that appear to be at variance with each other from the standpoint of either of the great parties. They want British connection maintained in one article of their platform, and they want unrestricted reciprocity with all countries in another; they want the Senate abolished; they require that customs duties shall be imposed only for revenue, never for protection; they would greatly extend municipal power over all officials in the services of the county; they want the machinery of government to be greatly simplified. A platform with such planks as these

in it is certain not to find very general adoption. Its parts would be considered irreconcilable with each other by either Liberals or Conservatives. The progress of the Patron movement must therefore be as much retarded by the political dogmas to which its supporters must subscribe, as by their theory of trade upon a 12½ per cent. margin profit and a strictly cash basis. There are very many men who would refuse to join the Patrons on account of their political platform who would readily connect themselves with them if the association were merely a co-operative buying concern. The Patrons have certainly some strong opponents in Halton among the political party that was supposed to back up their candidate unanimously in the last election.

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The irreconcilable elements in the Patrons' political platform, the visionary and impracticable reforms contemplated in it, must necessarily limit the number of people who will join the association, while the difficulty of raising the cash pre-supposed in their scheme of trade must be rather a severe principle of selection for any large proportion of the farming or industrial community to belong to it. Add to these factors the unwillingness of merchants to surrender their independence as traders, and the obstacles in the way of the Patrons ever amounting to much will appear to be too considerable to be left out of the calculation. The economic impossibility of any association of consumers controlling prices through its subjugation of the retail stratum of distribution is of itself a hindrance that cannot be got over. It is plain, therefore, that the Patrons cannot last and increase. It is satisfactory that so far they have not been able to derive any factitious strength from politics. If there had been any moment when times were so bad in this country as to hurry any large proportion of the voters to adopt the Patron platform on the eve of a general election, it is conceivable that a section of representatives of that association, too numerous and solid to be despised, might be able to obtain concessions, as the price of their support, that would be very inimical to independent trade. It is very well that Halton did not make the mistake of sending a propagandist of Patron principles to the House of Commons.