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THE IRRESPONSIBLE BUYER

ONE of the greatest evils from which the Canadian fruit industry suffers is the irresponsible buyer. Every year Canadian fruit growers are defrauded out of tens of thousands of dollars by sharpers who deliberately and carefully lay their plans to fleece such fruit growers as will trust them with the disposal of their crops. As the season is now approaching when these buyers will begin their operations, a description of their methods may serve as a warning to trusting growers.

The buyers referred to are usually well supplied with money by old country firms through a well known and apparently reliable commission dealer on this side, who often is at the back of the whole scheme. In most cases this dealer never places more than one buyer in each district the same season. The first year one of these buyers operates in a locality he proceeds to make himself "hail fellow well met" with as many growers as possible. A pretense is made by him of buying a large quantity of apples. For those he buys he generally pays cash, thus establishing his reputation with the growers as a man of means and integrity. Were his operations to be investigated, however, it would generally be found that his total purchases did not exceed 4,000 or 5,000 barrels. In some counties these tactics are continued a second year, but this seldom occurs.

As a general rule a buyer of this kind the

second year quietly sets to work and contracts for as many barrels of apples as he can secure, 20,000 to 30,000 often being purchased. Operations are conducted so quietly few of the growers have any inkling of the extent of his purchases. If some of the growers are sharp and shrewd the buyer, when necessary, keeps them quiet by paying them 50 to 70 per cent. of the value of their crops and thus avoids suspicion. Whenever possible, however, the growers are put off with one excuse or another, until after their crops have been shipped.

A favorite excuse of the buyer for the delay in the making of payments is that he has just made a heavy payment for a large shipment, or that he is waiting for a remittance from the head office. Once he has secured the fruit and shipped it out of the neighborhood his purpose is accomplished. Later he goes back to the growers with tales of losses, claiming the fruit was injured in transit, that the market was glutted when the fruit arrived, etc. Finally he offers to settle at 20 to 50 cents on the dollar.

Not until then do the growers realize how they have been duped, and unfortunately for them they have no redress. For the first time they awaken to the fact that the buyer, in spite of his great pretenses, has no property or stake in the section by means of which they can obtain any recompense for the value of their crops. What makes it easier for these buyers to conduct their