

Vine Growers' Association, from the enactment of the last clause of the Internal Revenue Act.

In the first place its effect was to impress upon the people of the country the belief that Government was hostile to our Association, and fully determined to cripple it in every way within its power. Of course the necessary result of this impression was to render the sale of our stock impossible. Arrangements were in progress of negotiation for the sale of a very considerable number of the shares of the Association, on very favorable terms; but these were suddenly ended by the passage and publication of that Act; and, although we tried to renew those negotiations upon the basis of the Order in Council, yet such was the hypothetical character and uncertain effect of that Order, in the estimation of those to whom it was shewn, that it failed to remove the impressions created by the Act. The result has been that we have, up to this time, been wholly unable to dispose of those shares, and the Association is suffering in its business and credit for the want of the funds we would have had, but for the untimely and unmerited interference with our Charter.

Again, the clause of the Act in question discouraged and alarmed the shareholders to such a degree that they were unwilling to pay the calls upon their stock. One of them writes: "there has been a lamentable breach of faith on the part of the Government, such a breach, in fact, as would relieve shareholders from their liabilities if proceedings were taken in equity." Another one flatly refuses to pay up his calls, saying that he took his stock on the faith of the privileges granted by the Charter, and those privileges having been made worthless by Act of Parliament, he is advised that he is under no obligation to pay. The result of all this has been to cut off our supplies at the fountain, to discourage and dishearten our own shareholders, and to paralyze the efforts of the officers of the Association.

One of the objects sought to be attained by Parliament in granting our Charter was to encourage the Cultivation of Vines in Canada, and already the progress made by the Association was having the effect of stimulating the planting of the vine. Several persons within my own knowledge were preparing to plant very largely, particularly in the vicinity of Chatham, and through the western part of the Province of Ontario. But as soon as it became generally understood that the clause in the Internal Revenue Act restricted the Association to the grapes to be grown by the Association, and the effect of that clause would be to cripple, if not to ruin the Association, a very large number at once abandoned the purpose of planting vines, and many countermanded the orders for Vines which they had already given. Mr. W. S. Stripp, one of our shareholders, who is engaged in the business of selling vines and plants, assures me that the fear that there will be no one to buy the grapes when grown, arising from the blow given to our Association, will make a difference in his sales of vines, this spring, of not far from one hundred thousand vines. The effect of all this is to retard the planting of vines in Canada, and to destroy the supply of grapes which would have been raised, and which the Association expected to buy and to use in the manufacture of wine and brandy. You will see then that the blow which the Association has received from our own Government is one not to be easily remedied. The evil and mischief have been done, and a repeal of the clause relating to us will by no means restore us to our former position.

The ten years of our Charter will soon expire, but the confidence of the people is so shaken by the apparently hostile action of Government that something more will be required to restore that confidence than a mere repeal of the clause; and time must elapse, after that confidence is restored, before vines can be planted and grapes grown. We have lost the opportunity of selling our stock, upon which we depended to raise funds to meet our engagements, and our credit is suffering because we are tardy in our payments, and because the impression exists that our Government wishes to destroy and virtually repeal our Charter. And besides this, present shareholders are very unwilling to pay their calls, and some refuse, believing that they cannot be made to pay. Government ought, in honor and to preserve its own faith, to make suitable amends for the injury done to us. It should in some way supply the funds needed to place us right, but which we have been and are yet unable to obtain on account of their action; and the Government should so extend the term of our Charter as to compensate for the time of which their action has robbed us, and should shew such decided and generous support as will shew to the country that our Government is not only not hostile, but is truly and warmly favorable to our enterprise.