

# The Farmer's Advocate

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### EDITORIAL

#### THE HIDEBOUND PARTY PRESS.

The most shameful disgrace to Canadian journalism is the scurrilous, hidebound party press, which stands ready to subvert practically all considerations of public good to an unprincipled ambition to boost the stock of its party and increase its chances of handling the reins of power. To this end, the political party organ will distort facts, manufacture charges out of mere shades of suspicion, take for granted whatever seems to favor party interests, and bitterly oppose whatever might be construed as threatening those interests. It will deliberately throw dust in the eyes of the electors, hoodwink and betray. Party, creed and race prejudice it is not above feeding, and then preying upon. The press of both parties is tarred with the same stick, though some papers are worse than others. The whole ilk of the party organs are alike in the one important respect, that they are expected to stand by the machine, conscienceless, through thick and thin, no matter how dirty, how corrupt, or how roundly deserving of public censure. The party heeler, as a matter of course, counts upon the poltroons of the press. Party triumph is the end and aim; good government, beneficent legislation, statesman-like policies, worthy candidates, when there are such—all these are factors in the result, to be played up by the party managers and the party press as trumps in a game of cards. The rankling curse of party government is that good administration is made, primarily, a means to the end of party success, whereas party success should be but a means to the end of good government. It is, unfortunately, true that as yet we are not sufficiently advanced in the science and art of self-government to dispense with the party system of politics, but every self-respecting man seeing the grovelling of the partizan must hope and pray for the time when the whole pernicious, demoralizing system will be abolished, and the apron-string press along with it.

Meanwhile we rejoice in the increasing vigor and influence of the unmuzzled independent press, which estimates things to the best of its light and belief, according to the general interests. Also, it is encouraging to find occasional evidences of fairness, magnanimity and loosening of party allegiance among the party press, though there are still many petty sheets whose political horizon is bounded by the Grit or Tory committee rooms in the county town. One stultifies himself by reading such miserable rags, and the sooner the public express their disapproval by withholding support, the better. It is, unfortunately, true that, with these measly bickering, peanut sheets debarred, many communities would have no journal to support. In that case, let them pass by the local paper and subscribe to the metropolitan dailies and weeklies until such time as a worthy local paper appears in the field, and let the readers take pains to inform the local editor why they have discontinued his paper. Where the party press languishes, the independent is more likely to enter the field and flourish. In the last analysis, the character of the press depends upon the taste of its readers, though each acts and reacts upon the other.

We want more broad-gauge, disinterested, cosmopolitan newspapers in America, and those organs which will retain and wield the largest measure of influence in the future will be the ones that broaden out and cultivate a habit of thought and expression that will place National and Provincial welfare eminently above all considerations of local advantage or party ascendancy.

#### DOING THINGS WELL.

We heard a striking experience the other day, related to us at first hand, illustrating the advantage of doing things well while one is about it. The narrator, a retired farmer, informed us that, years ago, when he was commencing to farm, and had a very small capital account, sickness in his family decided him to dig a new well. Seepage water could be obtained by making a fifteen or twenty foot excavation, but, although a dollar looked like a cart wheel, he made up his mind to do that job, like every other, so that it would never require to be done again. He went down till he struck a never-failing vein of water, at a depth of some sixty feet. During his absence from home on the following Christmas Day, a large wheat-straw stack, built against the barn, was accidentally fired by an orphan lad who had sat down beside it in order to learn to smoke. Neighbors on the way to church saw the smoke rising, hastened to the scene, and, by using a neighbor's sap-buckets, which fortunately had bales on them, formed themselves into a bucket brigade, and by keeping the barn wet, and also that portion of the stack next the barn, controlled the flames sufficiently to enable other workers to fork away that portion of the stack against the building. Two days' work and another day's watchfulness served to protect the barn while the smouldering strawstack was consumed. "If it had not been for that well, which they couldn't pump dry," said the man, gratefully, "there is no doubt that the barn, with the unthreshed spring grain and a season's wheat crop in the granary, would have gone up in smoke, leaving me stranded and bankrupt."

"Another thing," he added, "I had previously made a vow that I would never insure my buildings, but the day after the fire, when an agent came along, I took out all he would put on, and have never owned an uninsured building since, nor have I every yet had one burned. Perhaps, as it happened, it was just as well that I was not insured at that time, for some of the neighbors suspected that I had deliberately set fire to the stack and gone away, to make sure of getting the insurance. I have seen many people burnt out since, and never felt like imputing that they had done it deliberately. It seems to me a most unlikely thing for anyone to do."

#### THE PRICE OF BEEF.

"Why should beefsteak be so dear?" is a question the modern housewife seldom has answered to her satisfaction. It is a question she will probably ask more anxiously as years roll by, for, notwithstanding popular fulminations against the "beef trust," the "packers' combine," and the "butchers' union," the root causes of the advancing prices for steak are much less affected by "combinations in restraint of trade" than sensation mongers would lead us to believe. Without attempting a precise analysis of all the factors, let us enumerate a few:

1. Increase in cost of production.
2. Increase in cost of retailing.
3. Fashion, convenience, use of gas for cooking, lack of culinary skill, and lack of knowledge of relative food values.
4. Cheap money.

In discussing these points, we shall begin with the last mentioned. It is pretty generally acknowledged that money is cheaper than it used to be. A dollar bill will purchase less general produce or merchandise of most kinds than it would twelve years ago. This is another way of stating that prices of goods have advanced, or that the cost of living has increased. The wage-earner or

salaried man receives more coin or bank notes for his services, but, in turn, pays out more for the necessities of life. If thriftily disposed, he has a larger margin on which to save; otherwise, his seeming high wages are to no small extent a delusion. He gets more cents an hour for his labor, but pays more a quart for his milk and more a pound for his meat.

Fashion, convenience, and the use of gas (which stops burning the instant it is turned off) lead many persons in summer to prefer quickly-cooked steaks to boiling pieces and roasts. In so far as it saves fuel, this is economy, and in so far as it secures comfort, at the expense of economy, it may still be justifiable for those who can afford it, but there are many persons calling habitually for steak who would be much better off with the more wholesome and cheaper boils or stews. One trouble is that many women marry without a proper culinary education. As a butcher expressed it, "Factory girls come in who can't cook anything but steak. It's steak, steak, till you're ashamed to look a steak in the face. If bullocks were all steak, we'd be in clover." In the winter more boiling pieces are sold, but even then the greatest call is for steaks and roasts. So the butcher puts up the figure on these cuts. Following are some representative prices in London (Ont.) butcher stalls: Sirloin and porterhouse steaks, 18 cents a pound; round, 15 cents; rib roast, 15 cents; cheaper roasts, 12½ cents; brisket, 8 to 10 cents; flank, 6 to 8 cents. As the butcher has to buy the whole steer, and can obtain only a small price for the portions least in request, the increased items of expense fall chiefly on a limited proportion of the carcass, hence the 18-cent steak, which in some places is 20 cents or more. One of the best solutions of the meat problem is common sense conjoined with domestic science, which will lead to a more general utilization of the cheaper but more wholesome and quite as nutritious boils and stews.

Cost of retailing is a large item, which has increased considerably of late years, owing to advance in rents and wages, especially the latter. A local butcher estimated that the wages of shop-hands were probably thirty to thirty-five per cent. higher than twelve years ago, while boys for delivery purposes, who could formerly be hired at four dollars a week, now demand seven, and some of the more fashionable stands pay nine or ten. Horses and horse feed are also dearer. In fact, the dealer referred to stated that his stand employed three delivery wagons, the weekly cost of which for wages, horse feed, shoeing, and wear-and-tear, would average \$12 a week. Thirty-six dollars a week for delivering alone! This multiplies out to \$1,872 per annum. The expense of delivering goods is enormous. A housewife comes in, gives an order, or telephones for a pound of steak, which probably has to be delivered in an out-of-the-way section. Sometimes the cost of delivering amounts to half the purchase price. However, it is all in the business. She is charged nothing extra for the service, but the aggregate cost is assessed on the consumer in the general scale of prices. A farmer who stops at the counter to take home a roast, pays for the delivery of fifteen cents' worth of steak to a city purchaser, who might as well have taken home his own, but for a snobbish disinclination to be seen carrying a parcel. The ends of economics would be served by a discrimination in price in favor of those who carry home their own meat.

Increase in cost of production results from the rising value of land and the less suitable class of cattle we now have with which to produce the beef. Especially in the neighborhood of cities,