

The Mail Bag

BETTER BUSINESS

Editor, Guide:—I like very much your editorial "Better Business" appearing in the issue of April 14 and hope that you will be able to find space for more of that sort of thing in future. Farmers who are so lax in their business as in the instances you mention should get no sympathy or help from The Guide or any other of the farmers' organizations; they deserve just what they get from the banks and other business institutions of the country. One finds that businessless farmers like you mention are just the ones to holler their heads off when one is owing them or falls behind even the days of grace in making settlement. I have always followed the plan of never allowing a bank or other creditors to send me a notice of a debt being due. I always make it a point to be present a few days before debts are due either with the money or a hard luck story. Results have been that I have invariably got all the time and consideration I needed, and I have been in some pretty tight places sometimes too. The only kick I have is the big interests and prices I have had to pay for things and service. The trouble is, that business is inclined to judge farmers as a class by the business ignorance and stupidity and I might add crookedness of a minority of farmers.

H. BATE.

Belle Plaine, Sask.

THE COUNTRY STORE

Editor, Guide:—In reply to your correspondent, J. H. Hamilton (Guide, March 17), I shall be favored if you will allow me to attempt to "answer the riddle" as Mr. Hamilton not unwisely termed it. For the whole matter is not one to be lightly considered, but is truly a complex one, hence the curious paradox that co-operative trading is immensely popular thru the rural West, while very little open discussion appears in print on what must therefore be a burning question.

The writer was born to a trade in a suburb of London, England, and remembers a condition of mercantile competition in that suburb, so thorough and effective that co-operative purchasing of the Western type would have been an expensive experiment. Given these conditions in the West and Grain Growers' co-operative trading would never have been inaugurated. But here are facts.

It is with extreme bitterness of heart that we Grain Growers see the whole machinery of federal government in Canada reverted to a state of capitalized feudalism. The various big interests are the feudal barons. The ministers, ex-ministers and members of parliament are the paid retainers. This modern feudal system has such a terrific grip of federal affairs as to be already causing the farmer to gasp for very breath. More than this, the evil influence has gradually wormed its way into our very midst. Some of the various forms it has assumed are temporarily out of our reach, but not all. The whole merchant industry having already been dominated to its hurt by the big interests of the East, has been compelled for its protection to form a further combine by means of which the retail merchants shall not become the losers in the universal looting. The grand accretion of losses is finally heaped on the farmer, who, struggling for dear life, has fallen back on his last resource—credit. He has received it and paid dearly for it, nor is the merchant necessarily the richer. Many farmers have found it their last resource in very truth and in losing grain, cattle, farm, home, everything, have necessarily repudiated their obligations to the merchants also. These losses, too, are also heaped on the remaining farmers. Such conditions naturally give rise to the big departmental stores, who, tho unable to fight the big Eastern interests, are yet able to crush the retail merchant.

It was only to be expected that out of sheer broken-hearted despair, arising from these and kindred troubles, the farmer himself should finally organize. Struggling for breath under the combined load heaped on him by the long chain of liabilities that have their commencement with the feudal barons of the East, and which pass forward thru medium after medium

until they rest on the shoulders of the man who, last in the line, cannot shift the burden, he uses his new organization to strike his troubles where they are nearest and most vulnerable—thru co-operation.

Your correspondent asks, "How can the new (co-operative retail) concerns do business any cheaper than their predecessors?" They will begin at the end and first strangle the vicious system of credit on stores. No storekeeper should be a loan agent to the farmer. At this point many will inevitably suffer on account of the fact that only the richer districts can deal co-operatively at the start; but we are governed by inexorable laws and for the initial crime of misgovernment the weakest have always to suffer the most. The second step will be their emancipation from the chains of the combine that has been at best a very questionable protector of the retail merchant. The third step will be the awakening that will come, slowly, to the still unsophisticated farmer as to the real meaning of this thing called "Protection." Thru that channel he will come, at last, to an appreciation of the fact that our federal government is not a government, but a governedment, and that Liberalism and Conservatism have nothing whatever

AN OPEN FORUM

This page is maintained to allow free discussion of all questions vital to western farmers. Up to the limit of space letters will be published giving both sides of all such questions. It is not possible to publish all letters received, but an effort will be made to select those most fairly representing different views. Short letters will be given preference. All letters must be accompanied by name and address of writer, tho not necessarily for publication. Unused letters will be returned if accompanied by postage.

of £1,000,000 during the year's trading has provoked two discussions in parliament.

The article will bear careful reading, showing that for big operations and manipulation of the markets the British grain dealers are very similar to their American cousins.

One point in particular is plainly brought out—that in view of the very large profits (which provoked two discussions in parliament), the chairman of the company felt the need of an explanation to alloy the "misunderstanding" in regard to the rising price of bread.

As our own grain speculators always explain their manipulations of prices by putting the blame on Liverpool, the enclosed explanation is interesting as it seeks to follow suit by the British dealers putting the blame on Chicago, the greatest grain market centre in the world.

H. CLIFT.

Bender, Sask.

A BOUQUET

Editor, Guide:—In looking back over the past half dozen years in which the Grain Growers' Association and The Guide have come to us, a wonderful



"Rising Tide" (17454). Clydesdale stallion owned by Theo. Clark, Perth. Winner of the three-year-old class at Ayr, 1914.

to do with it. He will then, perhaps, think to search thru the lobbies and ante-chambers of the federal mansion for the real governors—and so on till the root of our troubles has been completely exposed to the glare of daylight and the cure (let us hope) be found.

Many of us are agreed that the individual retail merchants are not as black, perhaps, as we have painted them. They are literally "driven of the devil." But if this splendid organized democracy of ours is ever to emancipate these poor struggling town-brethren of ours from the thrall of modern capitalistic feudalism, we must first of necessity emancipate ourselves from them. Then when we have restored the natural anti-combine competition that Henry George regarded as the truest co-operation, I do not think it will necessarily be too late to restore our country merchant to his time-honored and really necessary trade of middlemanism.

HERBERT F. TUCKER.

Kuroki, Sask.

MILLERS' PROFITS

Editor, Guide:—I send you a cutting from the Daily Telegraph (London, Eng.), May 3, containing the report of the annual meeting of Spillers and Bakers, the great milling firm, whose report announcing profit of £287,865 on a capital

change for the better has taken place individually thruout our locality. We owe fully 75 per cent. of this change to The Guide and the remaining 25 per cent. to our local Association.

Our Association has received some few members thru financial advantage and so forth, but the majority of us have become converted by honest convictions interpreted conscientiously which bring forth slowly but surely the dawn of a brighter day. Altho we all have had our ups and downs and differences, still the Association has had a flame that time and age have not dimmed. Also there has been an educational effect which causes one to be anything else outside of sulky, stubborn, narrow and a bore. Naturally it gives us the brighter light to raise our head and look at the world with marked intelligence as quoted in the following lines by James Russell Lowell:

They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and the weak;
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth they needs must think;
They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three.

OSCAR QUALLY.

Dacotah, Man.

HOW DEEP IS THE MUD?

Editor, Guide:—I cannot refrain from writing you a few lines of encouragement in praise of your paper and the good work you are doing. One thing The Guide has done for me is to teach me to think for myself. Before being a subscriber to your paper I used to be a party man in politics. Today I can't imagine that I was ever so foolish. But to show you how some of us farmers will stick to a certain party, I'll just relate to you what happened the other day in our local P.O. I received my mail amongst which was The Guide, and as is customary with me I turned to The Guide for certain market reports. I noticed with much pleasure the cartoon on the front cover. I called the attention of one of my neighbors to it and asked him what he thought of it and also if he subscribed to The Guide. He replied that he did not and neither did he intend to. I was much taken aback as he was last year the vice-president of our Grain Growers' Association and asked him his reasons for being so much opposed to the paper. His reply was that it was too partial to the Grits. I denied this and asked for proof for such a statement, and behold (now don't laugh) he said look at that cartoon. Isn't the Tory further in the mud than the Grit? Now, Mr. Editor, you see what you are up against, so do be careful when you are preparing your cartoons to measure very carefully the depth each party is in the mud. I have just finished reading your splendid article, "A Contrast in Two Careers," and wish you would forward by return mail a copy of the Life of John Bright.

NON-PARTIZAN.

THE NATIONAL POLICY

Editor, Guide:—I see in The Guide, copied from "Ottawa Citizen," that the Hon. W. T. White has said in the House of Commons "that the National Policy was inaugurated in this country for the express purpose of building up cities to provide a home market for the farmer." Did one ever hear such arrant rot, fancy a minister of finance saying it. You have heard of the "people of a certain island, called the Silly Isles, who made a living by taking in each other's washing." That is what the N.P. is supposed to be doing for Canada, but how is the country ever to get any richer, if the farmer only works for the cities and not for export? It is all too silly, only it is so sad that it is too true, and we are suffering. We don't want to build up large cities, they have done enough harm already.

F. W. GODSAL.

Cowley, Alta.

REAL POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

Editor, Guide:—I notice in your issue of June 2 a letter entitled "Independence in North Battleford." Now if the farmers of North Battleford want to be independent why do they not practice independence by going into politics in the most independent manner possible and organize an independent political organization, independent of the Grain Growers' Association? Why would they endanger the very existence of so useful an association as the Grain Growers' Association by going into politics? This association has accomplished more for the farmers than any former rural organization and it would be a suicidal policy to get into politics. What we want in our association is unity of purpose. We desire that all farmers, whether Conservative or Liberal, should find in the association a very paradise of freedom and a unity of purpose, all working together for the up building of a glorious and prosperous country where all citizens will have a square deal. As regards politics, it is time to be up and doing. The rural population should organize political associations and nominate candidates in sympathy with rural requirements, not necessarily sacrificing other interests, but other interests are so far in advance in regard to legislation that for the present we need not give them very serious consideration. I believe in political independence that is truly independent, hoping all things and desiring not the jeopardizing of any association, but be-

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