

The Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine

PERSEVERE
AND
SUCCEED

ESTABLISHED
1858

REGISTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1875

Vol. XLVII.

LONDON, ONTARIO, NOVEMBER 28, 1912.

No. 1053

EDITORIAL.

It is characteristic of the versatile and amiable disposition of the weather of Old Ontario that some of us should be permitted to fill silos under the sunshine of mid-November.

Talk about the strenuous life and the high cost of city-living, but as "Uncle" John Hyatt, of Prince Edward Co., says the active farmer has as strenuous a life as any business man in the city.

Furnaces have a good deal to do with the high cost of modern living. Not only do they burn more coal than is used in the average house heated—or partially heated—with stoves, but they spoil many cellars so far as the storage of vegetables and fruits is concerned. This means hand-to-mouth purchases in small quantities at high prices.

A heartily applauded address at the Dry-farming Congress, at Lethbridge, was given by Australia's representative, Hon. Neil Neilsen, who dwelt on what is being done by the Australian Government to help the common people; and particularly to bring producer and consumer together, thereby assuring reasonable prices to the former without overburdening the latter. Some radical legislation has been passed by our Australian fellow colonists. In not a few particulars they have blazed the way for us.

It is surely disturbing to the self-complacent assumption that men have progressed to such heights of moral and intellectual improvement to find how quickly even members of the sedate "mother of Parliaments," the British House of Commons, which is supposed to be an example to the world, lapse into scenes of ruffian disorder that one might expect from a bunch of hoodlums. Under the surface, human nature remains about the same as it ever was, covered with a veneer of civilization. Each individual in every age seems to need regeneration.

We often hear the expression "toll of the middleman." It is misleading. In some cases the middleman pockets nearly the whole price paid by the retailer, leaving the producer barely more than a miller's toll. The case cited at the Ontario Vegetable Growers' Convention of tomatoes purchased from the grower at less than half a cent a pound, retailing in Toronto for six cents, is calculated to arrest attention. Think of it—eleven-twelfths to the railroad and middleman, one-twelfth to the producer. That looks like reversing things with a vengeance.

Sir Edmund Walker, President of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, is quoted as having suggested in a Winnipeg address that farmers do not receive due consideration in regard to credit when compared with that given speculative interests. Unquestionably true. Many a Western farmer is being forced to turn his grain over to the grain dealer at a sacrificing discount because the latter is able to obtain credit with the wheat as security, whereas the farmer holding the same wheat in his granary would not be. A change in this feature of the Bank Act is called for—and it is not the only one.

The Toll of Transportation Companies.

As was brought out in discussion at the recent convention of Fruit Growers in Toronto, the education by our various Farmers' and Fruit Growers' Associations in Canada has been directed more towards production than towards transportation and marketing, but it is high time our attention was turned to these latter two important points in the welfare of every producer, and not only of the producer, but the consumer as well. When two such organizations as the Ontario Vegetable Growers' Association and the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association concurrently discuss "transportation difficulties," there must be something wrong with the transportation facilities now existing. That railway express and steamboat companies, the former in particular, charge exorbitant rates in many instances, and are unnecessarily slow in fulfilling their part of the marketing of fruits and vegetables was clearly shown by facts and figures brought out at the meetings. How can our producers improve marketing conditions if through lack of proper cars, and with unreasonably slow transportation they are practically shut out of our best home markets?

Fruit and vegetables are perishable products, and should reach their destination in a comparatively short time if they are to be placed on the market in the best possible condition to command highest prices and to satisfy the customers, and increase the market. Satisfied customers mean a great deal in the increase of demand. Transportation Companies can do a wonderful work towards this by seeing to it that goods under their care in transit are carefully, quickly and properly handled.

Have our producers a grievance? Most certainly yes. It was brought out in discussion at one of the Fruit Growers' meetings that fourteen car loads of fruit shipped this past season to Western points from Ontario averaged in transit less than seven miles an hour, and for distances of from 1,500 to 2,000 miles, individual shipments made less than three miles per hour, three and one-half miles per hour, four miles per hour, three and one-half miles per hour, six miles per hour, etc., many of them a slower pace than a good team would walk. Of eleven cars which one shipper sent to Winnipeg one took seven, two eight, one nine, one ten, one thirteen, one fourteen, one fifteen, and one sixteen days in reaching the destination, and the losses averaged from \$125 to \$330 per car. There seems to be little excuse for such tardiness. An Elgin County delegate to the Vegetable Growers' meeting cited the case of a shipment of apples requiring ten days from Port Stanley, in Elgin County to Toronto, a distance of about 150 miles. Can such things endure? Were the product being shipped the most resistant to hard usage and storage damages, such slow progress in transit should not be tolerated, for the bottom might easily fall out of the market while the goods were on the road. The producer or shipper under existing conditions is unable to form any very certain idea of the condition of the market when his shipment reaches it, for it is too much of a speculation as to how long it will be on the road.

Time is not the only grievance. To add insult to injury the railways and express com-

panies charge exorbitant rates. They seem to think they ought to be paid for the time it takes them to deliver the goods, rather than the length of the journey. The rates are excessive as is shown by the following figures from an address given by G. E. McIntosh at the Fruit Growers' meeting. A car load of apples shipped from St. Catharines to Winnipeg, 1,234 miles, costs \$127.20, but to send it 480 miles farther to Saskatoon, costs \$91.20 additional. Hardly a proportionate increase. A carload of fresh fruit, shipped by express, from the Niagara District to Winnipeg (20,000 lbs. min.) costs \$530.00, and to haul it the extra 480 miles to Saskatoon the charge is \$880.00 or \$350 extra. It almost looks like robbery. These are instances of excessive rates which help to crowd Eastern growers off the Western markets. Are the rates here at home justifiable? Not if the American roads are getting a living profit, and we believe they are. Mr. McIntosh cited instances where apples from Lyons County, N. Y., were placed on the market of the American Soo for 42 cents per bbl., while Ontario apples cost 60 cents per bbl. to be carried to the Canadian Soo. From Minnesota to the American Soo, 494 miles, the rate per cwt. was 30 cents, while from Forest, Ontario, to the Canadian Soo, 169 miles less it was 54 cents. From Chicago to the American Soo, 673 miles, onions went at 22 cents per cwt., while from Forest, Ontario, 348 miles shorter distance, the charge was 26 cents per cwt. Not satisfied with high rates expressmen will "hold up" both shipper and consumer if possible. A case was brought out at the Vegetable Growers' meeting where an expressman absolutely refused to place a small shipment of potatoes in a house, because it sat back some thirty or forty feet from the kerb, without an extra twenty-five cents. Is there any wonder shippers are "up in arms"? The only wonder is that they have stood it as long as they have.

Nor are delays in transit and excessive charges all. There is still another weak place. The number of properly equipped refrigerator cars is not equal to the task which confronts it. The greatest trouble in getting these cars is experienced at non-competitive points. This shows that the Railroads where they have the producer in their power, owing to lack of competition, care very little whether he loses or not through their delays. Mr. McIntosh suggested that the Railroads failing to supply refrigerator cars at any station within three days after being ordered should be made bear the loss, if any, sustained by the shipper, owing to the delay. This we believe would be fair and just, as if the car is held over this time at a station by the shipper he must pay demurrage charges. No company obtaining its right of operation from the Government which if it is responsible Government (which we believe we have) is in reality the people, should be allowed to humbug the people and cause those who make their operation possible and pay their profits, great loss through carelessness or insufficient equipment to cope with the demands which the people make upon their space. According to Mr. McIntosh the number of refrigerator cars on the three of our leading Railroads was 2,040 in 1908, and in 1911 three years later it was 2,409, an increase in three years of only 369 cars, while the number of tons of fruit carried in 1908 was 429,930 as against 607,478 tons in 1911, or an increase of 177,548 tons for 369 cars. The demands increased much faster than the accommodation.