

man began to report upstairs to Jimmie and the old man with bulky rolls of blue prints, on which were irregular patches of colored areas, with marginal notations. Maps accumulated, and more devices were installed to file them. A dozen stenographers were kept busy with subsidiary correspondence, and the chief filing clerk from upstairs came down and organized a system for filing and tabulating vast numbers of reports of temperatures, high, low, and mean, together with rainfalls, barometric readings, and general meteorological data.

Upstairs the old man sat with his hand on the throttle; real estate men from the big centres came and went by his private entrance in a steady succession, and a score of confidential satellites flitted in and out. A special legal department was formed and was kept busy drafting or scrutinizing title deeds and options on vast areas of abandoned farms and other land throughout New England and the Middle States. And Jimmie, faithful each morning at his desk in the old man's sanctuary, grew dizzy in the maelstrom of shifting, whirling energy.

A trivial incident had been the foundation on which the old man had built the scheme. A little perfunctory notice in a daily paper had caught his eye some days before his interview with Jimmie. It briefly stated that from the Botanical Gardens two bunches of bananas had been sent to the patients of the tuberculosis hospital on the East river. They had been grown under glass, he read—but they had been grown in the United States! Later, when he thought over the banana problem on the evening after the interview, this recurred to him—they had been grown in the United States. It could be done; there was the proof—he would found a great American industry!

One night some weeks later, the old man pressed a button and a powerful group gathered around the long directors' table in the private room of his uptown club. There were a couple of New England senators and a few congressmen from scattered but reliable constituencies, and the remainder were representative of the heavy-caliber, substantial business interests. On each chair lay a printed pamphlet—the charter, as it stated on the cover, of the Consolidated Tropical Fruit Products Development company; folded within was a blank for stock subscription pledges. Attached by a wire clip was a typewritten statement, headed: "For the Daily Press."

Jimmie sat at the old man's right near the head of the table. His name was printed in the pamphlet as one of the incorporators of the new company, and today he was to take an active part. He was to read a few typewritten statements, as befitted the potential secretary. As the faded Simmons ushered in the last expected magnate, Jimmie's father rapped on the table with his knuckles.

"I reckon most of you gentlemen

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Harry Mitchell, 466 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, is now showing and explaining the J. B. L. Cascade.

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know the purpose of this meeting—at least in a general sort of way," he announced, "so that we can get together on some of the details. I won't take up any more time now except to say that I'm backing this proposition to the limit. It's the best project I've ever handled, and if we all stand together on it there's more profits in it than we've ever made before."

"Another thing; Jim here is to be the secretary—and there's a lot of room in it for some more sons and relatives, and I guess that'll come in handy for most of you, anyhow. You've read the copy of the charter of the Consolidated Tropical Fruit Products Development company; it's to raise bananas on the waste lands in New England, and it's drawn so that we've the power to run anything from a Dago boarding-house to a pipe line. Jim, read that statement that's been written for the newspapers, and then if there's no objection we'll send it out."

Jimmie arose with his mimeographed typewritten copy in his hand, and read:

Experiments made in the past few years in the growing of bananas under glass in the Botanical Gardens of New York have demonstrated conclusively that it can be done. A new field is thereby opened to American industry. Two bunches were recently presented to a local tuberculosis hospital in triumphant conclusion of these experiments.

No more important field for a great national industry has been opened up than that which lies in the development of this tremendous and proven opportunity. Not only will it solve the question of the enormous areas of abandoned farms and cut-timber tracts throughout New England and the Middle States, and thereby give employment to thousands of workmen, but it will react throughout the country and stimulate every industry that is related to this great development of the American home-grow banana. This is obvious when it is considered that millions of feet of glass will be required for the vast areas of greenhouses, that thousands of tons of structural steel will be needed for the frames, and vast quantities of paint and putty to finish their construction; also, in the line of accessories, there are the boilers and heating pipes, the brick and cement, and the enormous demand for coal that will bring prosperity to all these trades.

The Consolidated Tropical Fruit Products company proposes to begin on a moderate scale and at the end of the first year to have one hundred thousand acres of these abandoned and cheap lands under glass, and to expand this acreage as rapidly as possible. It is safe to say that no industry that has been undertaken in this country in the last half century has held such tremendous possibilities of profit and prosperity as lie in the growing of the American banana. It is only natural to expect that our government will lend its protection to such a vital national enterprise.

Jimmie laid down the typewritten page, and the old man handed him another. "This is the engineers' report. Read it, Jim. No, not all of it; just the summary—I've marked it."

And Jimmie read:

As the result of the above-mentioned experiments (the two bunches grown in the Botanical Gardens) it becomes a simple matter to arrive at the total production on the basis of the first year's operations, i.e., a basis of one hundred thousand acres under glass and planted to bananas. It is proposed to use the latest methods and intensive cultivation, and therefore the banana trees should be planted ten feet apart each way. This will give an average of four hundred banana trees to the acre, or a total of forty million banana trees. Allowing only one bunch of bananas to the tree and also figuring but two hundred bananas to the bunch, there would therefore be grown for the first year the total of eight billion, or eight thousand million, bananas.

Continued next Week

GRAIN CAR LEAKING

The Grain Growers' Guide has been advised that the Canadian Pacific car No. 146016 was seen in a leaking condition west of Makaroff, Man., on the C.N.R. main line, on October 2. The informant believed that the car was loaded with wheat.



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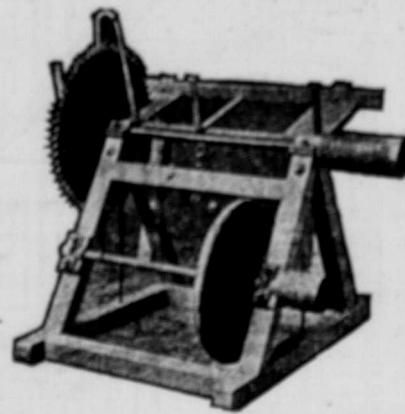
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