

THE FARMING WORLD

Devoted to Canadian Country Life

Published on the
1ST AND 15TH OF EACH MONTH

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FARMING WORLD, LIMITED

Publishers
Rooms 506-508 Temple Building
TORONTO, CANADA

Eastern Agency of The Nor' West Farmer

Co-operation in Agriculture

The principle of co-operation is frequently accepted and worked out in practice without any organic union or it may be any definite design. Farmers while working separately and independently of each other by doing the same things really carry out the principles of co-operation. Whole sections of farmers follow the same methods and grow the same crops which joined together find their way to the same markets in bulk affording reasonable profits. A small quantity could never be handled because of the proportionate excess of freight. In this case the principle of co-operation applies without any definite design. The Farmers Institute or the Agricultural Association are in reality co-operative organizations intended to teach and stimulate the individuals within their influence to work towards a common result beneficial to all alike. But when there exists the need this principle can be carried farther with much benefit

to all concerned. We are delighted to notice how many of our farmers lately manifest a willingness to carry this principle in many directions certain to increase the profits of the industry.

Co-operation is valuable and important in assisting production, but it becomes even more valuable in many cases when applied to the profitable distribution of the articles produced. The surplus grain of any country must of necessity be shipped to its final destination in bulk. No one would dream of sending a small quantity to a foreign market, hence the custom of disposing of it to a common buyer who invests large capital and speculates on the result. Grain is easily prepared for market by machinery, but when it comes to dealing with fruit the proposition is much more difficult. The same necessity exists for forwarding in bulk so as to lessen as much as possible the cost, but in this case machinery cannot be utilized to any extent. The hand of an expert is needed and this is not always found on the farm where the fruit is produced. Hence the demand grows for some co-operation.

An organization in the southern part of Ontario County has been formed for dealing with the apple crop. Here the attempt is to avoid unnecessary loss in the sale of the product, or to put it in a positive way, it is to endeavor to secure all the value instead of giving most of it to the purchaser and shipper. Pewish to congratulate the parties interested on this new move. It has for a longtime been much needed. The sale of apples as usually conducted is entirely guess work. They are purchased so long ahead that it is impossible to estimate their real value. Besides, they are usually handled so roughly that much of the value is lost. The organization in Ontario County is, as we understand it, an attempt on the part of the growers to conserve their own interests in this respect. If by collecting them at a common centre they are able to offer 1,000 or 10,000 barrels, instead of lots of 50 or 100, they are much more likely to receive their full value. But this co-operation will fail unless the same principles are applied in all the grading of fruit. If the apples of any district could be gathered in the rough at some common centre on the railway where they could be sorted by an expert and guaranteed to be

a certain grade and then offered in large quantities to buyers in Britain, their full value would be obtained. This would necessitate the erection at central points of storage buildings which need not be of an expensive character. But the main thing needed is a merciless grading so that the choice specimens would bring their highest value, while all down to the lowest grade could be disposed of and not wasted as at present.

The chief difficulty in dealing with the fruit problem in Canada is the limited time in which it must be harvested in order to escape danger from frost. This means that long before the ripening of the fruit the arrangements for handling it must all have been made so that no delay shall be experienced at any point.

Many parts of Canada are admirably adapted for the production of choice fruit, but so far no general scheme has been worked out to prevent the constant waste invariably witnessed in many places. The result is discouragement leading to further carelessness in management, all tending to much loss.

We venture to express the hope that out of this movement for co-operation in handling our fruit may come relief which will add materially to the returns of the actual producer. We make no excuse for saying that our sympathies are entirely with the owner of the orchard. He has diligently cared for it for many years and is entitled to the full value of his product. The dealers are it may be a necessity but they do not need nor do they ask for any sympathy. They can be trusted to gather in their full share of whatever profit is going. But without co-operation the producer is very often helpless and stands at the mercy of the dealer who has far greater knowledge of the situation and is often not always particular how he uses it.

There is still another direction where some enquiry should be instituted, as to whether some co-operation is not needed on the part of the consumers. We refer to the wide margin between the price paid for meat in Toronto by the consumer and the price paid to the farmer for the live animal. It would seem to cost much more to distribute the meat in the city than to produce it in the country. But this phase of co-operation we must leave for another article.

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