

THE MIDDLEMAN.



R. G. S. PALMER, of New York City, writes a very sensible article in the *Fruit World*, showing what a waste of time and money is often spent by the commission merchant in keeping agents at various points soliciting fruit consignments, or in doing this himself. He thinks the shipper should be left to his own judgment in this matter, and the merchant should attend only to his legitimate business. He farther adds :

The daily auctions that are being held at four or five different points, has become quite a serious feature in the produce market, as a demoralizing influence is frequently the result, for the reason, if only a limited quantity is forced on the market in its overstocked condition, the lower prices are quickly noised about, and the values of the supply in the whole market is depreciated. This easy and quick method of getting rid of a large amount of produce (at some price, even if not satisfactory to the owner), is becoming a temptation to the trade.

The tendency of human nature to speculate on new schemes will afford temporary encouragement to many of the new methods of marketing which are claiming advantages over the old and tried system of selling on consignment. But I am a firm believer in the law of the survival of the fittest, and that the commission merchant is as legitimate and important a factor as any in commercial lines, and to a great extent indispensable, as \$100,000 worth of perishable products of this vast country must be daily disposed of. The markets are clogged, in fact, no time to seek out buyers, the fruit must go forward or perish. The commission merchant has slipped into this breach and saved the producer. He says, "send on your goods, my store will be open at 11 a.m. to receive them, my salesman will be on the dock at midnight to dispose of all arrivals, and you will have your reports of sales by wire at your breakfast table."

Yes, the commission merchant is a necessity, and he will not be driven to the wall. He is here to stay. But, gentlemen of the trade, let us as far as is possible and practical, meet the requirements of the shippers, and eliminate all objectionable features, and endeavor to build up a closer relationship by working direct with your shippers, and not through a third party.

To the grower or shipper let me urge you, after carefully selecting your merchant (and let it be one deserving your patronage), show your confidence in him by giving him your undivided shipments. He will appreciate your patronage and strive the harder to please you, and retain it. Do not be easily swayed by these rumors of extreme and fictitious prices, that are floating in the air, around the depots and wharves, at the opening of the shipping season. But stick to your man if he has a record, and at the close of the season you will not regret it.