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## EDITORIAL.

### Mail-order Business.

One of the most remarkable characteristics in modern business is the growth of transactions by mail. All the indications point to its continued development, and there must be good reasons for it. One of these exists in the advantages offered by large mercantile or manufacturing enterprises, which grow up in the great centers of population, where transportation and other facilities are concentrated and secured upon larger and more favorable terms than under more isolated conditions. The departmental store is one illustration of the way in which concentration and specialization in buying and selling go hand in hand. The rapidity of distribution has been made possible by improved means of communication by post-office and telegraph, and still later the telephone, which is rapidly transforming old ways in country districts. When the Postmaster-General gets ready to institute free rural mail delivery in Canada, he will still further help the good work along. In the way of distribution or filling the order, the postal, express and freight service have all been taken advantage of, and the demands upon the speedier methods of carriage will steadily increase. Through the press and otherwise, those in business make known to half a continent in a week's time advantageous offerings, and the mails and transportation companies do the rest.

One can hardly credit some of the lines which mail orders now cover. From one of the leading piano men of the country a short time ago, we were surprised to learn the extent to which costly instruments were now purchased in that way. One would naturally think the musical buyer would want to see, hear and choose for him or herself, but this does not follow. Said the dealer referred to: "We are more particular in filling an order upon instructions received by mail than if persons came to our warerooms, because then they act and judge for themselves, and may not be so well suited in the end as if the onus were placed upon our judgment. We must satisfy the distant customer or his sisters and his cousins and his aunts would all know, and we would soon see our mish. But when he is pleased they all know it too, and more orders follow from the locality. An order by mail puts our house upon its honor."

This view of things, and the mail order business generally, shows that humanity is not losing faith in itself, despite occasional rude shocks and some pessimistic notions to the contrary. The piano man said it was surprising the few bad debts they had ever incurred in selling that way. When people order by mail they really need things and carefully consider the cost, and the question of settlement which they sometimes forget under the spell of the travelling salesman.

In the pure-bred live-stock trade we have another and still greater evidence of the satisfactory and economical character of this system of doing business. It would, of course, be difficult to compute the vast volume of business upon this continent transacted in this way, and which has done so much for the improvement of our studs, herds, flocks and poultry yards. When fresh blood is needed men consider well the class of animal or animals which they require, and by means of a simple letter their requirements are carefully and fully stated to one or more breeders who have on hand the kind of stock desired. Terms are stated, and like the piano man the breeder is then placed upon his honor, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he will take special care to

satisfy his customer, whom by upright dealing he makes a friend, who returns again and sends others as well. Considering the vast volume of business annually carried on in this way, complaints are rare, and we have found in long experience and observation that where something turned out unsatisfactory the one responsible has been ready and willing to make things right, as between man and man. Clear and frank statements in correspondence, and integrity on both sides, are the conditions of satisfactory mail order transactions.

### The Transportation Commission.

The permanent Canadian Railway Commission, the purpose and composition of which was discussed in the last issue of the "Farmer's Advocate," is entirely distinct from the Transportation Commission, which is temporary in its character and designed for the purpose of obtaining information for the guidance of Parliament and the Government. The commission consists of well-known business men, Messrs. E. C. Fry, of Quebec City; John Bertram, of Toronto, and Robt. Reford, manufacturer and live-stock breeder of Montreal, with Mr. C. N. Bell, Winnipeg, as Secretary. Its objects have been summarized in the following way: "The broad, underlying principle of the commission is that we have competitors carrying out goods, and it is before the commission to find out why competitors were carrying out goods and how much they do carry, how they are equipped and what there is for us to do to meet this competition." The competitors referred to are American railways, and the ports are Boston and Portland and others. The commission has practically carte blanche, so that its powers are large, and the inquiry will be exhaustive. Covering Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific, it may be a couple of years before its work is wholly completed. At an early date, however, they should have secured information upon certain points that can be utilized in the extension and improvement of our facilities for transportation by our lakes, rivers, canals and railways, so that the country will enjoy the full advantage of the St. Lawrence route and the Maritime ports. Sessions of the commission have already been held at St. John, N.B.; Halifax, N.S., and other points in the Maritime Provinces, and its work is probably completed there. The commission were impressed with the magnificent natural facilities, and the growing trade of Halifax and St. John harbors, and the imperative need for early extensions and improvements. It was suggested that the Government should establish a Canadian Lloyd's, in view of the fact that Halifax was unfairly discriminated against by the insurance companies. The view was also expressed that Halifax would be the great winter passenger port and St. John for freight.

The shipping facilities of Quebec, Montreal and Toronto will yet be investigated, and evidence taken at Depot Harbor, Owen Sound, Collingwood, Midland, Kingston, and an investigation made of the Trent Valley Canal and its possibilities. Coming on west, the upper lake ports will be enquired into, and the transportation requirements of the west on out to the Pacific coast.

In view of the visit of Commissioner Fry to England this winter, and the absence of several important persons connected with Canadian shipping interests, the commissioners have adjourned until spring, when they will be better able to proceed with their investigation and interview the

men they want. In the meantime the secretary has been instructed to get together certain statistics and attend to general routine business.

### Sheep Profitable Stock.

The almost unanimous testimony of farmers and breeders who raise sheep is that, considering the cost of keeping, there is no class of live stock that is as profitable. No stock can find for itself so early in the spring or so late in the fall, and their winter term of feeding is therefore shorter by nearly two months than that of other stock. They require no expensive buildings for housing, an open shed being the most wholesome quarters for them, and only where early lambs are required is a closed fold necessary. Where clover or peas are raised, the vines of these crops make the best of fodder for sheep, and may constitute the principal part of their winter feed. Where roots are grown very little grain need be given, though the last year's lambs will be the better for a light ration of oats and bran, and the ewes as lambing time approaches should have the same to keep up their strength and provide milk for the lambs when they arrive. No other stock can be so quickly and cheaply cared for; no daily cleaning of stables is needed, no grooming, no tying and untying; thirty to fifty, or more, may be safely kept in one lot in one pen, if sufficient ventilation be afforded; the waste litter from their fodder, as a rule, supplies sufficient bedding, and so closely do their feet pack it that the accumulated manure is practically air tight, and cleaning out of the pens more than twice in a winter is seldom necessary. In summer, sheep will live largely in lanes and by-places, where other stock would starve, and will eat many weeds which no other animals will consume, preventing these from seeding, and thus helping to keep the farm clean. The complaint that they rob other stock by biting the pastures close has little force, as they leave the long grass for the cattle, preferring the short, sweet bite, and are content to follow after their bovine friends, picking up the crumbs, while the ground they pass over is enriched by their droppings, and made to produce better crops.

Even where dairying is a specialty, a small flock of sheep may be profitably kept, and we know comparatively large flocks are paying well in conjunction with beef cattle. A natural increase of from one hundred to one hundred and fifty per cent. may safely be counted on in the average of years in the flock besides the fleece, a dividend paid by no other farm stock, which, when the price is good, brings nearly half the value of an ordinary grade sheep, and pays for its winter keep. True, wool has been low for several years. Like everything else, it has its ups and downs, but the prospect for better prices both for wool and mutton and for breeding sheep is steadily improving, and no one need be surprised to see in the near future a substantial advance in values of both. The indications certainly point that way.

As that discriminating and successful breeder, Mr. John Campbell, clearly pointed out in his letter on this subject in our last issue, the cost of getting an increase of lamb is quite one dollar a hundred pounds, live weight, less than that of adding a hundred pounds weight to the cattle beast, and for the past ten years well fed lambs from February to April have sold at one dollar to one dollar and a half more per hundred pounds than good quality cattle, while the cost of labor in caring for the flock is much less. Given a field of rape in the fall months, lambs will