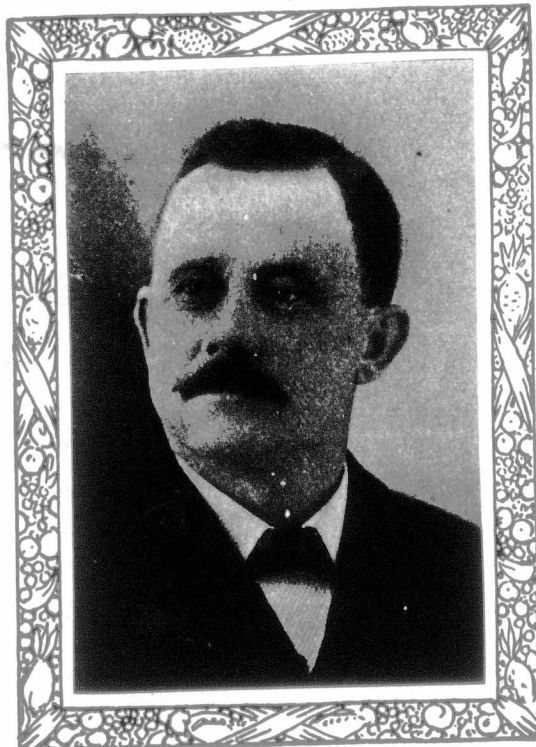


Confessions of a Travelling Agent.

During the latter part of the 19th century, I was a travelling agent for farm machinery. I was sent as a pioneer to open up new territory for the product of the firm I represented, and as my duties consisted of appointing and instructing local agents, I came in contact with many curious characters on the farms.

I was once taken by a local agent to sell a machine to a certain farmer. I was warned that his wife was "the boss," and that both husband and wife had peculiar notions regarding religion. Just what their creed was I could not ascertain. The day was very stormy, and it was absolutely necessary to secure an invitation to "Come in and get warm," if we expected to do business. A little maneuvering secured the desired invitation, and I lost no time in improving the acquaintance of my host and hostess. Our conversation had not lasted longer than five minutes when I was asked what was my religion? Feeling that upon my answer depended the success or failure of my mission, I answered that it was always my desire to work by "the Golden Rule." My host and hostess seemed to have a vague idea that rules were used for measuring articles and distances only, and could not understand why I used such costly material when brass, steel or wood would do as well. I hastened to assure them that the Golden Rule was for measuring conduct, not articles. Then, "What church do you belong to?" asked my hostess, and the sparkle of her eyes warned me that no trifling would be tolerated. "The Universal Church," I answered, "and all mankind are my brothers and sisters." Now, my hostess was far from cleanly in appearance. She would weigh at least 200 lbs., was muscular, and, I had heard, was a believer in corporal punishment, and had not infrequently administered vigorous chastisement to her spouse, so it was with a feeling of relief that I noticed a softening of her somewhat harsh features, and her answer, "Why, that's just like the Disciples," was music to my ear. I had learned that the family were members of the "Disciples Church," and religion was no longer a bar to our friendship. A cordial invitation was extended to the "local" and myself to stay for dinner, which was in course of preparation by the only daughter of the worthy couple. This was about as unamiable a specimen of the human female as it was ever my lot to encounter. Her ample form was clothed in a dress of blue derry, which bore unmistakable evidence of frequent and recent visits to the cow stable, as did also her shoes. Her hair was black and coarse, and looked as though it had long been a stranger to the gentle manipulations of a competent hair-dresser.

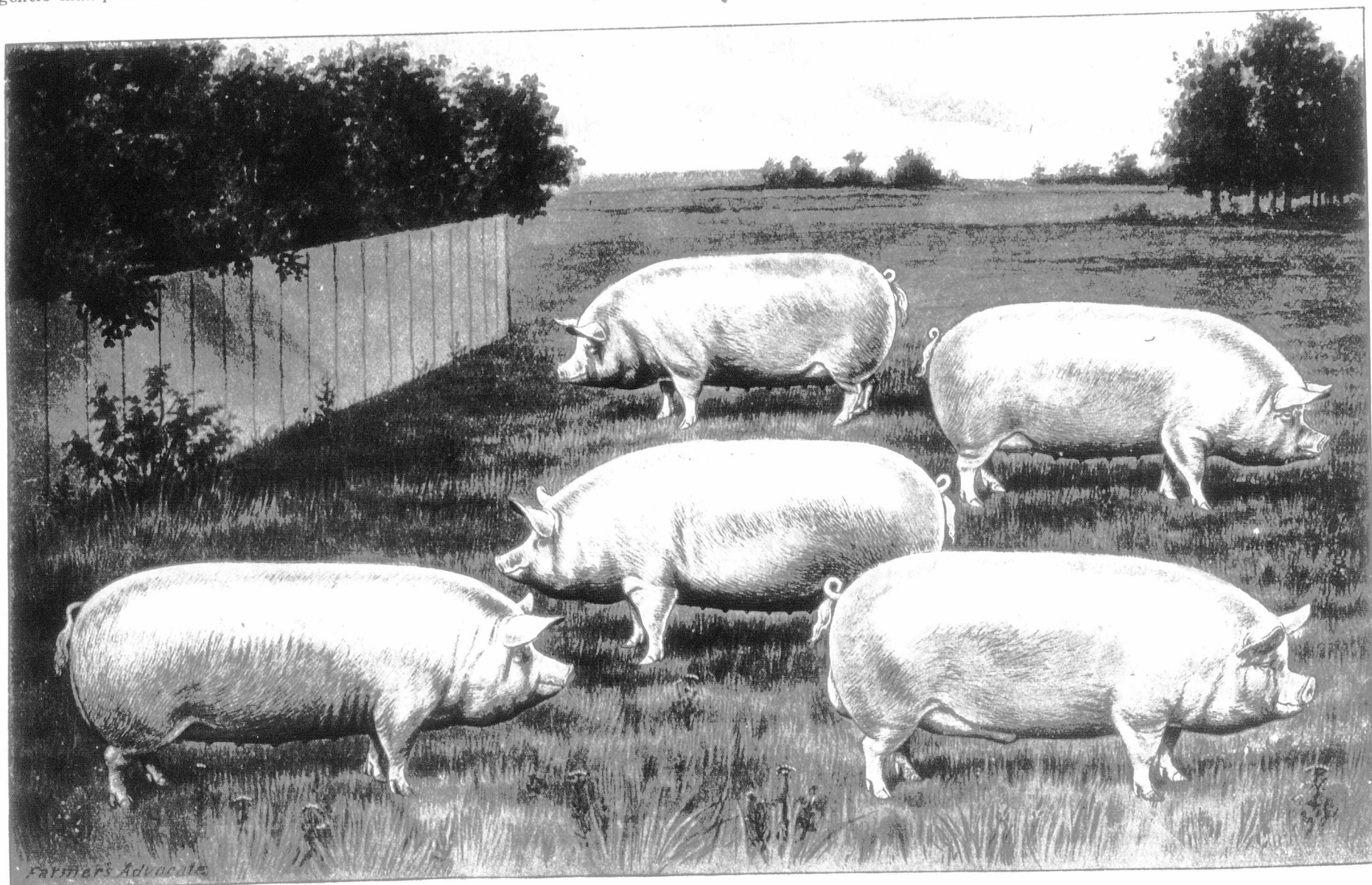


D. C. FLATT.

It was with small appetite for the viands that we accepted the invitation to dinner, and amid odors that were anything but soothing to the olfactory nerves we continued the discussion on Christian ethics until, dinner being announced, we surrounded the hospitable board. By this time our hostess was convinced that I was of the true faith, and at her request I offered up thanks for what was one of the most unsavory meals I have ever partaken of. Did I make the deal? Certainly I did. The lady gave the order with very little persuasion, and when her husband ventured to complain about terms, she silenced him by a look which said, "I am doing this." The money? It was paid promptly, and I believe with a firm conviction that it would have been a sin to have kept it a day longer than the stipulated time. Moral: Never quarrel with a prospective customer's politics, religion, or habits; and if you accept his hospitality, eat what is set before you, and make your hostess believe you enjoy it, even though you fear it may kill you.

Sometimes it pays to quarrel with a man when all chance of doing business is at an end, as by that means you get rid of him. I had such

an experience with a man to whom I had gone several times without success, and who bought from a rival agent. I made no complaint about his suiting himself as to which firm he patronized, and when he bought, I made up my mind to leave him alone. But he was not satisfied to leave me alone. He seemed to think that it was very clever to get into a crowd of farmers, call me over, and then tell how much the machine he had bought was superior to mine. He had played this game twice, and I had kept quiet rather than engage in an altercation. But I saw that he derived so much satisfaction from my apparent discomfiture that either he must be silenced or I must submit to his ridicule whenever he had an opportunity of favoring a crowd with a joke at my expense. He was counted a very respectable man, and wealthy. Moreover, his neighbors regarded him as something of an oracle, which made it all the more necessary that he be silenced, but added not a little to the difficulty of finding a means to this much-to-be-desired end. I got my ammunition from one of his neighbors with whom I had done business. Although it was very hard to do business with him "on the square," he was an easy mark for the "faker" who promised to make him rich or gave him a chance to make something out of his neighbors. I treasured up all my information determined not to fire a shot until the opportunity offered to deliver a broadside that would crush him beyond the hope of recovery. My opportunity soon came, and under such circumstances that I must either silence my man or lose a customer. I was walking down street with the customer in question, when I was hailed by my tormentor, who was surrounded by about a dozen farmers, all of whom were "open to conviction." There was no escape, so I entered the crowd and offered the usual greetings. These were scarce ended when my enemy began to pour forth the vials of his contempt upon my machines, my methods, and myself. I let him run on until he seemed sure of victory and offered to bet \$100 on the superiority of the machine he had purchased. I offered to take the bet, and produced the money. But my opponent was not eager to take any risk, and after a good deal of haggling, backed down. But he was not silenced, and as that was my only object in entering into the argument, I proceeded thus: "William," said I, "you are making yourself ridiculous, and these men are all laughing at you. You set yourself up as a judge of machinery, when you are really not capable of managing the most ordinary affairs on your farm. True, you have some wealth, but then your father, knowing your lack of business capacity, gave it to you to keep you out of the poorhouse. Had you, like most of those present, had to start



CHAMPIONSHIP PRIZEWINNING YORKSHIRES AT PAN-AMERICAN AND INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS.
PROPERTY OF D. C. FLATT & SONS, "SUMMERHILL FARM," MILLGROVE, ONTARIO. (SEE ARTICLE ON PAGE 843.)