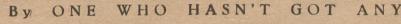


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What of the Apple





LL people in the Maritime Provinces, all those anywhere within a day's journey of the Okanagan, may laugh at this plaint of the apple. For all the rest of Canada it is—Twenty Cents a Small Measure; and when you put them in your pocket, three out of the six may be windfalls. A small measure is a quarter of a peck. It takes twelve pecks to fill a barrel. The rest is plain arithmetic.

Canada is playing both ends against the middle this year in the business of apple-growing. Both ends are teeming with apples. Each end has more apples than it can shake a stick at. Nova Scotia a few

weeks ago had a million-barrel crop on the trees. A storm later blew a hundred thousand or so off. There is still an easy 400,000 barrels surplus. And Okanagan has a heavy surplus. It has all happened before. But it never happened before that the surplus apples couldn't get out. Even the hogs are not numerous enough to eat them. Surplus apples in Annapolis and Okanagan are worth somewhere about five cents a barrel. In Middle Canada the price is over \$9.00 for windfalls, bruised, wormy, 20 per cent. waste. A good apple is worth the price of an orange and a half. Ontario is almost as destitute of apples as the prairies. And Ontario is decorated with orchards. That's what they call irony. The sarcasm of nature. An Eskimo wouldn't begrudge \$10 a barrel for windfalls, because he wouldn't pay five cents for a kayak-load of first-class Northern Spies or Kings or any other kind of apple, any more than a citizen of Toronto would pay five cents a carload for blubber. But it's cruel to have an apple taste along with a 20c. a small measure price for windfalls.

Four millions of Canadians, more or less, brought up on apples, may whistle for their apples this year. Over a million others will be pretty nearly walking over the apples to get anywhere, as the inhabitants of Digby tramp over cherries on the sidewalks.

Ontario and Manitoba don't begrudge the two ends their overplus of apples. But the apples can't be sold. There is an embargo. Ships are too scarce. England is doing without apples, except those she raises herself. Apples are classed with the luxuries. But on London streets they never were anything else. The London lad who gnawed an apple a few years ago considered that he had a greater delicacy than an orange or a pomegranate. But even in London 20 cents a small measure might be regarded as the greengrocer's joke. Middle Canada is as far from the apple region this year as London is.

The philosopher asks why. He wonders how it is that in the very year of a huge crop at both ends of the country and no market either in England or the United States, there should be an apple famine in middle Canada? There should be somebody in Ottawa to blame for this. The thing looks too much like a conspiracy. If Okanagan and Annapolis could sell their apples for anything like what they cost in Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal, there might be some compensation. Money always helps. But the mental picture of 400,000 barrels of good apples going to waste at one end of the country while half the population have no winter apples at all, makes even a patient citizen feel like making an example of somebody.

Among the large number of things with which public opinion—public opinion to the contrary—has nothing to do, this apple situation is pretty close to the top. Nature played a trick on the country. It might have happened that Ontario had a big crop of apples. In which case the farmers would have been in a wild way to get them picked and packed. But Ontario had a wonderful crop of almost everything else. Why did the apple trees fail us? Like the simple people of old we ask the question. Heaven does not answer. We conclude that 2,000 years of Christianity and other things have taken such things out of that department of thought. There must be some plainer reason. There is. The nature-student who raises apples conjectures that:

1916 was very wet up till the middle of July; very dry for several weeks afterwards. The wet weather brought on the next year's buds too fast; the

drought parched them up. 1917 opened the campaign with almost no fruit buds. As a proof of which, remember that the winter-apple trees bore little or no blossoms this year.

This makes very little practical difference to those who have to pay 20 cents a small measure for windfalls. But it relieves the Government, or anybody else.

More's the pity. It would be more comfortable to blame somebody. Even the Germans. Blaming nature is no satisfaction whatever. Nature can't be brought to book in an investigation. Speeches in Parliament against nature don't look well in Hansard. Headlines against nature are a

dead waste of ink. Bringing the local member to book for a failure of nature gets nowhere. We can't even blame the Food Controller. This is the worst cut of all. What did we invent a Food Controller for if we can't blame him for everything that goes wrong with the food business. We appointed him early in the summer. He had time enough to see that we had plenty of apples. It's no use for Mr. Hanna to say that dictating to an apple tree how many barrels of apples it will bear is out of his department. This matter of apples, we repeat, is not ultra vires. It is absolutely intra vires. When Mr. Hanna was appointed, to be sure, it was too late to wave a wand over the apple trees and make them bear. Mr. Hanna is not Moses; we admit that. We don't expect him to present us with Manna every morning that we don't have to pay for, and we don't ask him to lead us into a land of milk and honey. Neither does he have to perform miracles on the fruit-trees.

But there was surely some way out of this apple impasse. We are surprised that none of Mr. Hanna's advisers have found it. Mahomet did the trick a long while ago. Surely Mr. Hanna is as wise as an Islamite. But we fear not. He has left undone the things which he ought to have done.

All he had to do was to get the apples of Annapolis and Okanagan shipped into the parts of Canada that have none. He will no doubt allege a scarcity of cars. Then he should be able to build cars. If the trouble is in locomotives he should be able to commandeer engines for that purpose. If no engines, why not Food Controller airships? We expect the extraordinary. If Mr. Hanna is not prepared to perform a few plain miracles, it should have been a miracle that he ever got the job.

But the Food Controller has done none of these things. Some weeks ago, however, he, or somebody else in Ottawa, sent an enthusiast into middle Canada to arrange for an Apple Week. The people who had no apples were to be taught the use of the apple. Newspapers were to carry large apple advertisements. Teachers in the schools were to tell about the apple. Women's editors and other wise people were to explain the 43 ways in which the apple can be cooked and eaten. Preachers, for all we know, were to deliver sermons on the apple. Everybody that knew anything which he learned yesterday about the apple was to help us make a fireside friend of the apple as we used to do in the good old days when we brought up a panful of Spies from the cellar and with socked feet on the chairs and with neither knife nor plate proceeded to put those Spies into oblivion before bedtime.

Apple Week did not come off. Did somebody blunder in carrying out Mr. Hanna's idea? Or did the Food Controller have nothing to do with it? If the information is not forthcoming we ask the Food Controller to authorize an Apple Week—to tell people who like apples and can't get them, how to get along without apples.

THE FRUITS OF OKANAGAN

A WESTERN correspondent sends us a careful and enthusiastic survey of the fruit production in that famous modern Eden—Okanagan. The Okanagan Valley, says Oliver E. Mann, takes pride in the fact that while it has not been many years in the fruit business, it now produces and (Continued on page 22.)