

The Transportation of Farm Produce.

The advantage of living in a city consists largely in the fact that sidewalks are good, pavements are good, street cars are convenient, household requisites may be ordered by telephone and quickly delivered at the door, the means of getting from one place to another and of obtaining all needed articles are of the best.

Compared with farm life, the contrast is striking, and it becomes apparent that one of the greatest disadvantages of farm life is that there are no sidewalks, roads are bad, and all means of going from one place to another, of transferring goods are difficult and laborious. It cannot be said to be wholly due to the fact that distances are greater in the country than in the city. For to go five or six miles on a stormy day in the city is by no means uncommon, and is quickly and easily travelled by street cars; whereas the same distance in the country is often a journey of considerable proportions in view of the difficulties presented by bad roads and the less convenient means of travel.

The lesson is an obvious one. The isolation of country life is not a matter of miles, but a question of the most convenient means of travelling. While the farmer cannot hope to place himself wholly on a par with his city cousin in this respect, he can certainly do very much more than has been done in the past to improve his facilities for transportation. The farmer, except in a few favored localities, cannot have the electric street car stop at his door, but he can remove much of the inconvenience which impedes him in all his business and social relations, which in many localities renders country life one of complete isolation for certain parts of the year.

Not only are the roads in a very bad condition during the wet seasons, but so much are they cut up at these periods that for a great part of the summer they are rough and disagreeable. When the roughness disappears, it means merely that the ruts and ridges are smoothed down into beds of dust, which rises up in clouds on the slightest provocation, to the intense discomfort of the traveller, and by no means to the benefit of whatever produce he may have in the conveyance with him.

One of the most serious drawbacks with which the farmer has to contend, is the difficulty and expense of transferring his produce to the market. The condition of the roads is such as to leave him largely dependent upon the state of the weather, for bad roads and bad weather is a combination which now go hand in hand, which seriously interferes with the prosperity of agriculture. The greater part of marketing, too, is done during the time of year when the weather is most likely to be unfavorable.

With roads, however, which are properly built; which rain will not soften and convert into quagmires; which the frost will not upheave and leave in a spongy state; but which at all times pre-

sent a hard surface; with such roads a journey can be quickly made at any season of the year, and stormy weather becomes a matter of minor importance, leaving the farmer free to transact his business, and market his produce under circumstances most favorable to himself.

What are these circumstances most favorable to the farmer? One is that he shall have a thorough acquaintance with the markets either through the medium of the newspaper, through a personal visit to the buyer, or other medium of information. This implies that a journey over the road to the post-office or to town may be quickly and readily performed, it implies that the roads must be good.

A circumstance which the farmer must not overlook is that having a close insight into the state of the market, he may be able to transfer his produce at the time he considers most suitable, irrespective of roads and weather. This is particularly true of wheat, changes in the price of which are at times rapid and of a considerable amount. What is true of wheat is true of other staple articles of farm produce which are frequently kept locked in the barn while prices rise and fall, bad roads preventing them being moved.

Another matter in which the farmer can make the marketing of his produce more favorable to himself is to carefully guard the quality. Fruit, vegetables, butter and dairy products are by no means improved by being jolted over a rough road on a hot day. A good road makes the time required for the journey shorter, and the greater smoothness of a good road causes less bruising and crushing. A dusty road cannot be fully guarded against; for dust will find its way through the smallest opening. All this injures not merely the real quality but also the appearance of his produce. The price obtainable is thereby lessened, and the difficulty of sale increased.

By means of good transportation over country roads, there is much land which, now valuable for general farming only, could be utilized for marketing, the raising of small fruits and other perishable produce. It does not necessarily follow that the farm must be within easy reach of a town or city over a country road, but if fruit and vegetables transferred from the farm to a railway station without injury, an energetic farmer can generally establish a suitable business connection in some city or large town reached by the railway. In this, however, we have the example of France and other European countries, where teamsters compete with railways in drawing goods two and three hundred miles over country roads. Under such conditions, even the railway is not a necessity to the market gardener for distances which, to mention them to the Canadian farmer, who knows only Canadian roads and the conditions under which they can be used, is a matter almost beyond belief.

To a number of Canadian fruits, apples,

grapes, pears, and peaches, which are most prolific in Ontario a market is opening in England. In order to avail ourselves of this market, there is every necessity that the quality of the fruit should be maintained at the highest standard. To this end, the first link in the chain of transportation, the carriage over the country road must be rapid and free from jolting, there must be no more exposure to the heat of the sun, to dust, and no more bruising than can be avoided, otherwise, the care in the remainder of the journey in providing rapid railway and ocean transportation and cold storage, is thrown away.

The transportation of dairy produce is another department in which the farmer can materially benefit from good roads. That milk is injured for all purposes by being jolted and churned over a rough road in the hot sun is well known to practical dairymen. Good roads would mean that milk could be sent to the town, city, or railway station for retail trade, to very much greater advantage to both seller and consumer. Good roads would also extend the possibilities of such trade over a much wider area of country. Beside improving the quality of butter and cheese produced by the factories, these factories could draw their supply from a much wider area of country, the number of factories would be lessened, and the cost of production per pound thereby decreased. The cost of haulage is a considerable item in the expense attached to many factories, which could be rendered much less by better roads.

Good roads would decrease the cost of haulage of farm produce, by lessening the number of horses required, increasing the size of the loads, decreasing the wear and tear in horses, harness, wagons, in addition to demanding less of the farmer's time. As has been pointed out, they would facilitate the business of selling farm produce to advantage, extend the markets, and improve the quality of the produce as supplied at the markets. In dairying the cost of making butter and cheese would be lessened, and the quality improved.

All these are matters which, looked at separately, may seem trifling, but in the aggregate they amount to a sum of no small dimensions. It is estimated that the cost of wagon carriage on this continent averages twenty-five cents per ton per mile as compared with eight cents in those European countries where good roads predominate. The contrast is more striking when it is known that the cost of carrying one ton for five miles over Canadian roads will carry a ton two hundred and fifty miles by rail, and one thousand miles by ocean vessel. To be consistent, the farmer who complains against excessive freight rates, should not neglect the portion of the transportation system entirely within his own control, the common highway.

Stranger—What are the principal objects of interest in this town?

Citizen—Savings bank deposits.