

## Freight Rates

### A Reply to "Viator"

**I**N the issue of The Farming World of Dec. 10th last appeared an extended letter signed "Viator," which purported to be a correction of misstatements made by this journal in its discussion of the freight rates charged by Canadian railways. Some reference to the general tone of "Viator's" communication was made in the same issue, and the way is now clear for a detailed examination of his counter-statements, which he described as corrections.

It may be well to point out at the outset that "Viator's" letter gives the impression that it is a complete review of the circumstances cited by The Farming World, but that a comparison of the article and the reply (a comparison which The Farming World would suggest to its readers to make) shows that several important points are passed over by "Viator" in silence. One, for instance, is the reference to the disparity between the rates charged on oats carried from the foothills of the Rockies and on Ontario farm products.

Again, the method of quotation followed by "Viator" does not show the austere accuracy which he exhorts this journal to cultivate. His first challenge of our statements is an instance of this. The Farming World stated, practically quoting certain editorial observations of the *Globe* of May 2, 1901, that the railways which more especially serve the rural population of Ontario, "for the past twenty years have been gradually advancing their freight rates. No sweeping increases have arrested public attention, but by small advances here and there, consistently maintained the rates have crept up." Then, expressly and purely as an instance of a general advance, The Farming World added: "Twenty years ago, as an instance, the Northern & Midland Railways carried lumber to Toronto and Port Hope for \$1 a thousand feet, and now the rate is double that."

The relation of this instance to the general proposition is evident. "Viator" quotes this sentence, but suppresses the important words "as an instance," and proceeds to give an explanation of the admitted increase in the rates. Then, on the basis of this explanation, he proceeds as follows: "Then, arguing from the particular to the general, which is a vicious process, you assert that railway rates for all kinds of freight have been increased throughout Ontario in the last twenty years." It will be observed that "Viator" asserts that The Farming World quoted the instance first and based its argument upon it; whereas the fact is the reverse, the instance having been included as a species of afterthought, to illustrate rather than prove a charge

which "Viator," it will be noted, does not attempt to answer. After observing this example of "Viator's" method of argument, The Farming World does not feel especially affected by his general remarks upon correct methods of argument. "Viator" has in this paragraph (1) misquoted, (2) misrepresented The Farming World. As for "Viator's" explanation, the rate on lumber, which he discusses, was instanced at the annual meeting of the Lumbermen's Association held at Lindsay a year ago. It may be agreed that lumbering is a business in which conditions change rapidly, owing to the changing areas of production; but the lumbermen did not seem satisfied on this score.

"Viator's" defence against the charge as to the high rates levied upon shipments of apples to the Northwest comes under three heads: (1) that the story is old; (2) that the rate has been reduced from \$1.57 per hundredweight to \$1.05 per hundredweight; (3) and that anyway the higher rate (\$2.50 per barrel) is not unreasonable. This is practically an admission of the charge and a justification of the high rate. We fail to see any correction, for The Farming World was careful, as it has already been pointed out, to state that the instances given were a repetition of charges made a full year ago. The statement that the rate has been reduced we are glad to publish; it does not affect our article, which expressly avoided reference to present day rates. But it is necessary to observe that "Viator" makes no reference to the point of the whole charge, which was a comparison of the low rate charged for cattle going eastward with the high rate for apples going westward—\$197 a car for cattle from Prince Albert to Montreal, as against \$518 for apples from Seaforth to Prince Albert. At the reduced fare mentioned by "Viator" the charge for the apples would be not far from double that for the cattle. Why is this the case, especially when we hear that much of the movement of freight cars consists of the sending of "empties" westward to get the western cattle and grain? Are the readers of The Farming World satisfied that the rate is justifiable, as "Viator" maintains?

"Viator's" next paragraph is an excellent example of his methods of controversy. An explicit and clear statement in The Farming World as to the manipulation of freight rates so as to render impracticable the shipment of mixed car loads of fruit to Brandon is—shall we say summarized?—by a statement that this journal asserted that it was "impossible" to ship mixed car loads of fruit to Brandon; then, on the strength of the word "impossible," which did not occur in The

Farming World's article, he adds some freight rate quotations which convey the impression that such a mode of shipment is recognized by the railways. The statement by The Farming World stands untouched, and indeed unchallenged by "Viator," despite this disingenuous paragraph.

"Viator" next challenges the assertion, made by the late Mr. John McMillan, as to a charge upon apples shipped from Seaforth to the British market of five cents per barrel, or \$9 a car, more than upon apples shipped from Ingersoll or Wingham. All that The Farming World need say upon this point is that the late Mr. McMillan specifically stated that he himself had this experience. This journal is quite content to place Mr. McMillan's testimony against "Viator's" assertion. In this connection it may be well to note "Viator's" defence, founded on certain rates charged goods shipped from Ingersoll, Wingham and Seaforth, as an implied answer to the charge that railways grant treatment to competitive as against non-competitive points so much more favorable as to amount to great unfairness. As a summary of the general state of affairs in this respect may be quoted the remark made by Mr. John Macdonald, the senior partner of the very large wholesale dry goods firm of John Macdonald & Co., Toronto, upon the proposition to surrender the Intercolonial to the C. P. R.:

"At present goods shipped from Toronto arrive at their destination at competitive points in the Maritime Provinces in about five days, but goods shipped an equal distance to non-competitive points frequently take from ten to fifteen days to make the journey. Take any competitive points in Canada—London, Chatham, St. Thomas, or any other place—and you have proof of the advantage of that competition for business between railways which would be lost by the adoption of such a course as suggested by the Halifax Board of Trade. The instances to be found throughout Ontario of the advantages which have followed the advent of competing railways are too numerous and too well known to require any protracted argument in favor of competitive lines of transportation."

The concluding portions of "Viator's" letter are devoted to the rates on cattle. Here his method of argument is to assail the character of the report from which certain very telling statements were extracted; to oppose to this report "Viator's" assurance that he could not find such charges in the tables of rates; and an exposition of the vast proportions of the cattle trade from Chicago. Now, the report from which the facts cited by The Farming World were quoted was prepared in 1897 for and at the instance of the Dominion Minister of Agriculture, the author being a distinguished legal gentleman. The Farming World is quite content to accept as an authority