

The Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine.

"PERSEVERE AND SUCCEED."

ESTABLISHED 1866.

REGISTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COPYRIGHT ACT OF 1875.

VOL. XXXIX.

LONDON, ONT., AND WINNIPEG, MAN., APRIL 21, 1904.

No. 604

EDITORIAL.

For Good Roads.

The present seems a seasonable time for a sermon on the subject of road improvement. If ever farmers are to be effectually interested in this question, one would suppose it is while they are plunging through mud and mire in the attempt to get to town or to do any necessary teaming. It is inconceivable that there should be so much apparent apathy and indifference in regard to this much needed reform on the part of that overwhelmingly numerous section of the people, the farming community. We grant that thorough and permanent road building is a large subject, one that means much expenditure of money, and it is doubtless the vision of taxation more than any other cause that makes men fight shy of the proposition. No one questions the desirability of solid, smooth roads, comfortably passable at all seasons, but the years and decades roll past, leaving the people in many districts still dragging their weary way through mud or bumping over frozen lumps of clay, with practically no improvement on the roads of fifty years ago.

When we think of the complacency with which farmers who pay probably nine-tenths of the taxes collected in this country view the voting by our legislators of hundreds of millions to railway corporations to build roads for their own aggrandizement, and the hundreds of thousands of public money appropriated for the improvement of canals and harbors, the erection of extravagant post office buildings for the convenience of city and town people and the delivery of their mail at their doors, it need hardly be considered strange that farmers should be regarded as a meek and lowly people, willing and content to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the most favored classes. Why should not the farmers who have made the country what it is, and who represent its most important industry, demand a fair share of their own, and insist upon at least their leading roads being made permanently passable by the aid of public money. Road reform, in its best sense, may well be regarded as too large an undertaking for a township or a county, but why should not the Province and the Dominion contribute towards what may properly be claimed as a public benefit? And why should the present generation be called upon to bear all the expense of building permanent roads for the use of future generations? Why not bond the township, the county, the Province if need be, and petition the National Government for a liberal contribution as well? Let the undertaking be financed in a businesslike way, the Dominion, the Province, and the municipality co-operating for the public good, and let us have some roads worthy of the name.

The share of public money appropriated by the Government to agriculture and the interests of the farmers, is infinitesimal when compared with the magnitude of the industry and its value to the country, and in many cases where aid has been proffered it has been so cumbered by conditions as to render it practically unavailable. Until farmers more generally shake off the shackles of political partyism, and vote and act in their own interest and the best interests of the country, little headway may be expected to be registered in the matter of national road-making, but the signs, though yet feeble, are pointing towards an awakening, and we would urge upon farmers, individually and collectively, to impress upon their representatives in Parliament their deter-

mination to demand and insist upon their rights being respected in this regard.

In the meantime much may be done by a judicious use of statute labor, or of the funds raised by commuting statute labor under existing road laws, and by reasonable money grants from township and county funds to improve the roads we have, by the purchase and use of improved road-making machinery, by grading and solidifying the road-bed, and by surface drainage, to quickly remove surplus water and facilitate rapid drying in spring and after rains at all seasons. The institution by the Ontario Government of a good-roads department and an instructor in the art, should have the effect throughout the Province, as we are glad to know it has had in some sections, of stimulating the ambition of the farmers to improve their means of transportation on the common roads. There is economy of time in having good roads; there is added ability to take larger loads to market, and added comfort going to town or driving for any purpose.

Canadian and British Publications Handicapped.

Every thinking Canadian must of late years have been struck with the quantities of United States literature which, each week, comes rolling across the border to inundate our magazine stands and the tables of our homes; and possibly not a few may have asked the questions why it is that this is so; why it is that we do not build up a national literature of our own to supplant this plethora of foreign matter, and why it is that so few of the many great periodicals of the British Isles ever find their way here among the million exponents of Yankeeedom. Mr. J. A. Cooper, in a recent letter to the Toronto News, discusses the question most thoroughly, and in doing so presents a few facts which cannot fail to be as surprising as regrettable to those who have hitherto had no opportunity of understanding the disabilities which underlie the production of our home magazines. Mr. Cooper's article is most timely, and appearing as it does now when the agitation for a stronger Imperial Unity is a matter of such widespread interest, we trust that it will do something toward removing the incubi which for so many years have tied the hands of our British and Canadian publishers, and so made such an "American" invasion possible.

It is not that much of this U. S. literature is not good enough in its way. Attractive in form and illustration, often containing matter of high literary merit, and issued enterprisingly at popular prices, these magazines will be purchased, notwithstanding the fact that U. S. interests are given a proportion in them undesirable to the British reader, just as long as present conditions obtain. On the other hand, as Mr. Cooper has well observed, much of the "literature" that comes to us from over the border is of a much lower quality. Ministering neither to the aesthetic, intellectual nor spiritual faculties of the reader, bombastic to an extreme, posing the United States of America as the Almighty Ego, and representing the British Empire as an effete monarchy already tottering to its fall to make way for the lusty young giant of the Occident, the very presence of these periodicals on Canadian soil would surely seem to be a huge joke. Some magazines British in name circulate in our Dominion, but they are U. S. editions (or imitations), re-

plete with U. S. articles, and filled with U. S. advertisements. Those of us who have reached maturer years may, it is true, afford to look upon them with quiet amusement; but there is another side to the question. We have to look to the youth of our land, whose ideas are in process of formation, and whose judgment is not yet strong enough to discriminate between the true and the false. As the bards of the olden time helped to mould the destinies of nations, so the literature of to-day must help to perform a like office. Hence, it is high time that we should awake from sleep and see to it that no longer is the literature of a British land dominated almost wholly by the output of a foreign press. Apologists for the existing state of affairs may say our national spirit and loyalty are too well grounded to be disturbed by U. S. literature. It would be worse than folly to heed such a flimsy excuse. History condemns it.

As to the remedy: In the first place, as Mr. Cooper has observed, it will be necessary, if British publications are to enter Canada freely, for the British Government to reduce the postage on periodicals bound from the British Isles to Canada. This at present amounts to eight cents per pound, while those from the U. S. come at one cent per pound. British publishers, unable to stand against such a competition, have simply stopped sending their publications to this country, and although the matter has several times been brought before the authorities in England, the Postmasters-General have not yet seen fit to take any step in the matter. As regards the handicap to Canadian periodicals, the first step, as Mr. Cooper remarks, will be to cancel the Postal Convention arrangement of 1875. It was then arranged that mail matter should be exchanged between Canada and the U. S. at the domestic rates, a plan which was satisfactory in those days when we had no C.P.R., and were obliged to send mail for Manitoba and B. C. through the U. S. In '78, under the regulations of the Universal Postal Union, which we then joined, the rates should have been five cents per half-ounce letter, and eight cents a pound for newspapers and books. These provisions, however, have been a dead letter, and, as a consequence, since the C.P.R. was completed, "the arrangement has cost Canada millions of dollars, and has given to the U. S. publishers of monthly publications almost a monopoly of this market."

The second handicap which Canadian publishers have to meet is the duty of 25 to 35 per cent. on magazine paper, very little of which is made in this country, because there is little demand for it. To quote again from Mr. Cooper: "Suppose a man desired to publish a 10-cent magazine in Canada, the minimum edition would be 600,000 per annum, and its value \$30,000. On this the duty would be \$7,500. With a handicap of \$7,500 no publisher will undertake to issue a 10-cent magazine to rank with some U. S. publications."

By all means let the agitation for more favorable conditions for Canadian and British publishers continue, until the last handicap has been removed on the threefold ground: first, of trade with Britain; second, national sentiment; and third, the encouragement of home industry and literature. Let the postal authorities see to it that every facility for home literary production is encouraged, so will Canada gain not only in post-office profit and home manufacture, but in the building up of a stronger national spirit, and a national literature, such as is, after all, the best monument of any age or nation.