

"THE HONEST FARMER."

BY ONE WHO KNOWS HIM.

THe honest farmer, the yeoman of the country, the backbone of the country, the horny handed son of toil. These are the names by which he is known to politicians stumping for votes; to lightning rod men and shoddy peddlers vending their wares; to insurance agents canvassing for policies, and in fact to every one who has an object in taffying the cultivator of the soil.

The country merchant who has dealings with him every day in the year and who knows him best of all, is strangely reticent on the subject when behind his own counter, but when far from home has been known to indulge in a horse laugh and gaze in astonishment at the user of such appellations.

That there are some honest men among the farmers no one who knows anything of them can deny; there are some who in that respect are a credit to the country, but they are in such a small minority that their light shines all the brighter in the surrounding darkness. The term "honest farmer," when applied to the farming community by those who have no axe to grind in the matter, is supposed to mean the reverse of the literal interpretation of the words.

The way that the honest farmer victimizes the country storekeeper is simply fearful to behold. The heathen Chinee can't hold a candle to him. His best and ripest apples somehow nearly always get to the top of the bag; the butter his wife and daughters make is well salted to make it keep and make it weigh, with two pounds or so of brine at the bottom of the keg to prevent it tasting of the wood. The eggs gathered in the harvest fields are too highly flavored for use on the farm so they are traded for groceries and dry goods; the choicest potatoes are sold to the cash buyer for export, the small ones and the scabby ones are swapped for goods, and should the unfortunate merchant want a load of hay for his horse the driver is frequently weighed with the hay. He has been known to sell lead at 10 cents per lb. inside of a turkey, and harrow teeth at 7 cents per lb. in the throat of a hog. He believes in buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market; nothing wrong about that provided the stuff he sells is of the right quality, but he usually gets the highest market price from the country storekeeper for rubbish that the cash buyer won't touch, and the storekeeper is liable to lose his custom if there should happen to be any sand in the currants or if the dress is not fast colors that he has bartered for the truck.

He trains up his family to follow in the footsteps of their illustrious ancestor so that when they have homes of their own they may be worthy of the name of "honest farmer." A sample of their training may be seen during the raspberry season when the wives, daughters, and small boys go berrying. The average weight of a pail of raspberries is about 15 lbs., but many of them reach the store weighing 19 or 20 lbs., having been doctored with water in the ditch near the berry patch. These pails of berries can often be seen on express trains coming to the city in a state of ferment, frothing at the mouth as if mad at the treatment they had received, but quite good enough in the honest farmer's estimation to be made into jam for the city folks to eat.

He has been so pampered, petted, and flattered by politicians and others who wish to make use of him for their own selfish ends, that he believes himself to be not only the mainstay of the country but almost the only honest individual in the country. There is no dishonesty in his estimation in plundering those, who he believes would plunder him if they had the chance. Every combination of merchants, manufacturers and others is, according to his ideas, organized for the express purpose of plundering him, so he forms a combine of his own and petitions parliament to pass laws prohibiting all but the honest farmer from forming combinations.

Some years ago he thought he had sufficient business ability to run a combine that would do away with the middleman altogether, and open up a direct trade between the farmer and the importer, exporter or manufacturer, so he organized the Grange, and for a short time he was known as the Granger. He withdrew his trade

from respectable merchants who gave him a dollar's worth of tea or other commodities for a dollar, and paid the silvery-tongued adventurer a dollar for 80 or 90 cents worth. His eyes were gradually opened through his pocket; it was a slow process, but time will accomplish almost anything, even open the eyes of a Granger. He renounced the name of Granger and once more assumed that of the "honest farmer," and bestowed his patronage again on the storekeeper he dealt with before he became a Granger.

Lately he seems to have forgotten his sad experience as a Granger and has allowed some fakirs to spring a new idea on him by making him a Patron of Industry. His fertile brain was once seized with the idea of spoiling the Egyptians who for so many years had been spoiling him. Why not make the storekeepers who have been living on the fat of the land at his expense the hewers of wood and drawers of water for the honest farmer, and use their brains, their energy, their judgment and their capital to supply every article of commerce required, and give them as compensation a percentage on cost price large enough to buy one suit of clothes and one pair of boots a year, and keep the pot boiling without any pudding in it.

So the Patrons of Industry is sweeping like a vast wave over the whole Dominion, carrying the honest farmer on its crest, to leave him stranded bye and bye on similar shoals to those on which the Grange left him.

Bogus invoices, bankrupt Patron stores, and a peremptory demand for settlement of all outstanding accounts by solvent merchants, will soon put an end to the bright dream of the Patron of Industry, and show him up in the eyes of sensible people as the biggest fool and most unprincipled knave among the many classes of inhabitants of the Dominion.

A PERPLEXING QUESTION.

Business competition has become so keen that men now-a-days are forced, much against their judgment, to adopt measures for protecting their interests that they had never dreamt of. It is revolting to the nature of an honorable man to be obliged to descend to tricky devices to catch customers but what is he to do? He cannot tamely submit to have his trade prospects blighted by unscrupulous rivals, whose idea of business ethics is covered by the stereotyped phrase "each man for himself and the devil for us all." Preachers delight in denouncing from the pulpit tradesmen whom they charge with resorting to lying and cheating in the conduct of their business. We once heard a reverend gentleman declare from the pulpit that dry goods men every week from Monday morning to Saturday night did nothing but lie to their customers. They sold old-fashioned goods for the newest out, very often charging a price out of all proportion to their value. The evil was not confined to the proprietor but spread over the whole establishment carrying death and destruction to business morality with it. That was a severe and exaggerated way of putting it. There is a happy medium in everything. It is not necessary and would be exceedingly imprudent for a merchant to wilfully lie because sooner or later it would be found out and the injury to his business would be irreparable. But it would be just as imprudent for him to take every customer into his confidence and tell him or her how long a certain line of goods had been lying on his shelves &c. He would be laughed at for his simplicity or rather idiocy. If a direct question were asked in regard to a specific article we believe it would be in the interest of the merchant to give an honest answer but if no question is asked and the customer appears pleased with the purchase where does the moral evil come in? In the interest of business morality it is perhaps right and proper that truth should prevail at all times but the question arises what should constitute truth in business dealings.

CORRESPONDENCE.

We solicit letters from our readers on business topics. A practical merchant's views are always of great value to others in the same business, and we should be pleased to have our paper made the medium of exchanging such opinions and experiences.

Subscription to THE DRY GOODS REVIEW, \$1.00 per year.