

Green Goods Makes Fortunes

Long Before City Folks Are Awake, Gardeners Are Marketing Their Produce.



Group of Growers from S.A.M. Flashlight Photo

BY DEWITT HARRY.

COMING home with the milkman is not such a joke except to the roysterer. The early morning hours are periods of feverish activity on the part of the many servants preparing for another day in a big city. The roads into the town bustle with traffic, and not all of it is of gay parties returning from a night of jazz. The milkman and the truck gardener are coming in to supply their customers for the next day, and theirs is a serious and important part of any city's life. This matter of food is a vital necessity and when the right foods, fresh and in ample quantities, are available, the happiness and success of any city are doubly assured.

One of the most striking short stories of recent months was one that dealt with a small city that developed an ugly spirit of disagreement and rancor. For years this remained a mystery until a far-visited son of the town, on his return to the old home, discovered that the fault was the village baker's. This baker would save all he could in his fuel bill, with the result that the most of his bread was delivered raw and unpalatable inside. Indigestion resulted and the populace grew ugly and there was no cooperative spirit; all of the town was at loggerheads and ready to fight at the drop of the hat.

Good Food Breeds Contentment.

Unquestionably food supply has a great deal to do with the peace, contentment and prosperity of any place. People who have to import their food and necessities are at a disadvantage with those who produce their own. How many times have you thought of the "pies that mother used to bake" or the cider that could be had on the old homestead? The proposition might not be so evident, but reflect on the fruits and vegetables that you have at your table here in Oregon. In other communities it would arouse envy, and their recognition of the excellence of Oregon products has resulted in the building up of a high-class export trade in this state's produce. Portland, in the center of a fruitful belt, possessed of a kind climate, can get a table impossible in most other cities. But where do all these things come from? Who grows them? When you go shopping in the morning the corner grocery already has on display crisp, fresh fruits and vegetables with the dew yet on them?

Seventeen years ago the gardeners of Portland and vicinity realized that they must have some sort of a place to meet where they could attract buyers and dispose of their wares. At first they gathered each morning on the streets near the plaza blocks, in front of the old courthouse, but this created a nuisance, and they had to seek other grounds. The majority of these growers were Italians—there were about 35 or 40 of them—and they organized a co-operative marketing corporation, calling it the Gardeners' and Marketers' association. They set aside a certain portion of their earnings and managed to finance a huge frame structure covering an entire block on Union avenue at East Madison street. Here they held forth for nearly 15 years until they outgrew the place.

They Come With the Sun.

Now there stands, in this same location, one of the largest concrete buildings in the city, covering the entire block, 100x100 feet, two stories in height, with full concrete basement. This is the new building of the Gardeners' and Marketers' association, a structure costing them in excess of a quarter of a million dollars, and all for their own use. For most of the day it stands in seeming idleness, and if you want to see it teeming with action you'll have to get over there before sunrise. At 5 A. M. it is a hive of activity, and by 6 A. M. the marketers have overflowed the building and surround it on three sides in the streets. While the present association comprises

some 150 or more members on the ordinary day in the usual season, there will be 400 or more dealers on the ground.

Not only the producers come there, but all the buyers for the big grocery stores and the peddlers to stock up their carts for the day's trading. It is a mart of commerce of exceptional scope and the quantity of produce handled through this building in any one day is enormous. Most of the green food of the city comes here and is distributed. Here producer meets consumer or middleman, and they create their own market and set the prices for the day that rule the entire city. All of this is regulated by well-understood rules of supply and demand. The association derives its income from a daily or monthly rental charged for each stall or place in the building.

Fortunes Found in Vegetables.

Officials of the association, from their years of experience in the trade, estimate that the truck gardeners who trade in their place have 4000 or more acres



Directors of a Vital Civic Enterprise



Just at Dawn They Come by Hundreds.

under cultivation. They are practical business men and understand their game thoroughly. Many of them have amassed fortunes at it. There is no restriction in trading; any producer can come there and market his stuff. There are Italians, Americans, Chinese and Japanese. The Japanese have obtained a firm foothold in the trade of late years, especially during war times, when most of the other nationalities were engaged in helping out with the carrying on of the war.

The Japanese did not go into the shipyards or into the forests; they were not called to their flag; they stayed on the land, bought more and with the high prices that prevailed took a firm and lasting position in the trade.

The Italians and Chinese have been in the gardening game here for decades. They were the original truck farmers. They have not managed to broaden their activities to the same extent that has been the case with the Japanese. The Italian and the Chinaman are hard workers, but the Japanese puts his entire family, women and all, into the fields, and they manage to cut prices and produce cheaper. Many of the farms are 100 to 150 acres in size, and anyone who has

tried intensive farming out here on the back-yard gardening plot can realize something of the excessive labor necessary.

Early Fruits Bring Big Money.

The aim of all of the growers is early production or off-season growing. When everything is cheap is no time to market your stuff. The one who can bring in the first fruits of the season reaps the big profits. With corn at three sacks for \$1, tomatoes at 15 cents a box and other vegetables in proportion, there is not much profit for the grower. A good-sized load of fresh and appetizing vegetables does not bring many dollars. Many times the wagon or truck the gardener brings in will carry as high as \$200 worth of produce and \$100 and \$50 loads are usual. In June, with the spring berries and other early vegetables, \$200 a load is not a high average. One Clackamas rancher last spring brought in 300 crates of strawberries, the first of the season, and got \$5 a crate. It does not take many loads like this to pay off the mortgage on the old place, but the growers take what they can get. They never destroy their produce, bringing it all in

and taking what they can get for it in the open market. Prices are not influenced like it is possible with the importer, who does not hesitate, at times, to throw away carload lots when the market breaks.

To be a successful market gardener a close game is necessary. The farmer must know his soil intimately and make the most of it. He must know what crops do the best and specialize to a certain extent. Then he must have enough rotation to refresh his soil without relying on expensive fertilizers. The land near Portland is exceptionally rich, and this places the city in an enviable position. Produce is always low in cost, there is plenty of it, and the city table does not have to do without seasonal delicacies. This has the world and all to do with a contented populace and health. A great deal of credit is due the truck gardeners for their work along this line. Their farms nestle as close as they can get to the city limits, and they are making the surrounding territory a vast garden plot. Already the city is stepping into the role of an exporter, and it is only a question of a short time until it is able to send a goodly quan-

tity of farm produce away. Importations of green stuffs are on the decline, and with the production of new land, such as that just reclaimed from the Columbia to the north, there should be no necessity for any shipments into Portland.

Cornucopia of Plenty Here.

To get an idea of a real horn of plenty, a visit to this huge mart of trade in the early morning would be necessary. Most of the stuff that is later displayed at the public market first reaches the city from here. As the city grows the producers place new areas into production. Their claims to a better grade of produce than can be had in any other city on the coast are sustained by comparison. This important matter of supplying a city with food is vital. Feeding an army has its difficulties, and the immense quantity of green vegetables and fruits needed is astounding. Families eat but a small quantity each, but the aggregate is enormous. These producers are amply able to supply the needs of Portland and have been doing it satisfactorily for years.

While the association is in a sense a private enterprise, it caters to all the growers and buyers in the district and

practically has a corner on the trade. A few commission houses import their out-of-season stuff to the west side of the river, and Front street is yet another great section for this class of trade. But these two places are not a great deal in competition. They deal with different varieties of produce. Some plans lately have been made to have the Front-street commission broker district moved to the east side, and promoters already are engaged in the forming of a huge corporation to develop several blocks exclusively for their use. This may be worked out in a short time, and then it will centralize the efforts of this line of trade in one section. The association buildings have railroad sidings installed and are prepared to handle outside shipments.

As assets to a community the gardeners take high rank. They are excellent examples of producers of wealth, taking their profits from the land, making their raw acres pay dividends. With the rapid increase in population they have been put to their utmost to keep pace with the demand. They are men who know their line, who have devoted a life to specialization, and the majority of them are either in comfortable circumstances or on the way to riches. We do not pay much attention to the peddler who comes to the side door or who offers his wares in the market stall, but he is often in much better circumstances than the average customer he serves.

Steers Help Build Airship.

CLOSE to two million cattle will contribute to the making of the ZR-1, the huge airship now being built by the U. S. navy. The part that they take in the construction of the most modern form of transportation through furnishing "gold beater skin" for the airship forms a new chapter in the romance of industry.

Gold beater skin is nothing more nor less than a small tough section of the intestine of a steer. It got its name from the middle ages when goldsmiths discovered that by putting gold between two strips of this skin they could hammer it for days, making the finest gold leaf without tearing the skin.

Its great strength, along with its lightness of texture and the further fact that it permitted less diffusion of gas than any other known substance, recommended it for balloon work. This was tried out in England before and during the war and proved successful.

The ZR-1 is the first American airship to be constructed using the gold beater skin. It is a companion to the ill-fated English-built ZR-2 that went down in the Humber river near the city of Hull a year and a half ago. The great packing houses of Chicago, Kansas City and of South America are setting aside for the ZR-1 all the gold beater skin segment of the intestines of all the cattle killed and send them salted in a brine to the workshop at Akron.

