

ORGANIZATION A FACTOR FOR SUCCESS

Address of Louis Erb at the Apple Shippers Convention at Put-in-Bay.

In view of the fact that apple growing has been almost a failure in the Southwest, and particularly in what is known as the Ozark region, during the past few years, and that consequently no money has been made, it may seem a little out of order for an apple grower who has failed from that section to attempt to offer suggestions to the apple shippers. But it is all ways so. Men who do not succeed in making money themselves are ever ready to offer advice and suggestions to others how to do it. And this inherent weakness in human nature is my apology for taking up your valuable time a few minutes at the request of your genial secretary.

I presume you, Mr. President, it is no fault of ours that we have failed to produce paying crops. We have cultivated and sprayed our orchards, pruned and trained the trees, and our conduct in other respects as patriots and law-abiding citizens have been above reproach.

Some of you apple shippers who have gone to New York State and other favored point during the past two or three years to buy your supply of apples, and there beheld the trees in the orchards loaded down with the fruit will tell me that the Southwest isn't the right section for growing apples. Perhaps that would be true if the climatic conditions in this section of the past few years were to continue. But we can only judge the future by the past.

Old settlers in Missouri and Arkansas who have grown grain in the civilizing cause of fruit growing have often told me that prior to 1850 there had not been a complete failure of the apple crop in the Ozarks for forty years. I myself have bought apples in Missouri and Arkansas for many years, and better fruit, or more of it, I have never seen in my life.

Some scientists to whom I have talked, claim that the planets are largely responsible for the unusual climatic conditions that have prevailed during the last few years and which caused the several failures of the apple crop on the Ozarks. In their travel through the universe they are supposed to have run against each other in such a way as to cause trouble and confusion. Venus, the goddess of love and beauty, Jupiter, the son of Saturn, Mars the god of war, the sun and the moon are all held responsible. Now, whether any one or all of these and other planets had anything to do with the failure of the apple crop on the Ozarks I am not prepared to say.

One doubting Thomas, to whom I mentioned the matter, intimated that the devil had a hand in it. Well, he may be correct; but at the same time it is hard to comprehend why the "old boy" should interest himself in the apple growers while there are so many apple shippers and commission merchants abroad. It is my opinion that if it is the fault of any particular one of the heavenly bodies it must have been the moon, as nothing but a lunatic would have brought about such adverse conditions. The moon is capable of playing all sorts of tricks on the affairs of the world. Even so great an observer as Lord Bacon recorded in his time that eggs laid in the full of the moon hatched better birds, and that you can make swallows white by putting lintment on the eggs before they are hatched. Lord Bacon failed to say, however, whether to apply lintment during the light or the dark of the moon. And even to this day no successful farmer in the Ozarks will think of planting potatoes and corn, nor of putting sassaparilla sprouts except in the dark of the moon. On the other hand, some of the good wives of these farmers seriously object to having the hair of their boys cut in the dark of the moon, but claim that the best Friday in the light of the moon is the proper time.

One old fellow, a native of the enlightened state of Ohio, but now a Missourian, with the wool on, told me about the middle of last April, when my trees were getting into good blossom, that I would be sure to have a big crop of apples this year, because fruit was never killed in Blossoma during the light of the moon. When two days later a cold blast from the hoary north killed from 50 to 75 per cent of the blossom, I asked him how about the moon. He replied: "Oh, well, the moon is changed and you must make some allowance for that." But no matter what the scientists may say, no matter what the planet may do or the vagaries of the moon may be, as some Phoenix rose from the ashes and bleeding Kansas freed herself from the thrall of mortgages, old Missouri will come to her own again. She will again raise a bonafide crop of apple which will bring every apple shipper in this country to pay a visit. And, my friends, when you buy Missouri apples, and especially Missouri Bon Davis, like you saw in St. Louis last summer, in those glass jars, you will come to love money on the apple deal. But as every cloud has a silver lining, so our misfortunes have brought us in sympathy with the apple shippers, who, in a financial way, have fared no better than the Western apple growers. As the misfortunes of the apple shippers, however, as a rule, are not the result of climatic conditions, but rather to their own acts, it has occurred to me that they can be prevented. I assume that the International Apple Shippers' Association was organized mainly for the purpose of the mutual protection of the interests of its members. If so, why don't you co-operate in some way to prevent losses in the apple deal? Many years' experience, both as an apple dealer and an apple grower, has convinced me that the surest way to avoid losses on the apple deal is by proper distribution—that is, for each dealer in the different markets to buy no more apples than his trade demands. Whenever an apple dealer buys what he can reasonably dispose

of to his customers there is little danger of losses. But when he buys double or three times the quantity his trade justifies him in doing and allows himself to become deeply obligated to banks and cold storage companies, he takes chances like any other speculator, with the disadvantage that apples are perishable, and that therefore he can't sell "futures" against his purchases to protect himself like the dealer in grain or cotton.

On an advancing market, which is the exception in these times of large production, it is an easy matter to make sales and take up outstanding notes, but on a stationary or declining market a surplus of apples in warehouses and maturing notes in banks are like undigested dough on a man's stomach. It gives him morbid dyspepsia. It creates a tired bilious feeling all over and he can't think and act with clearness; his judgement becomes warped and he will either sell too soon or hold on too long and wind up with a balance on the wrong side of his books. It is a well known fact that more men go broke from over-trading than under trading. In no business is conservatism more important than in the apple business. Plunging may sometimes win, but, as a rule, it results in loss to those who attempt it and an injury to the general trade. No man can make money on apples where some other fellow is making a surplus at a loss.

Many years ago, when apples used to come down to Memphis in flat boats, I sometimes bought the whole load of several thousand barrels to keep the other fellow from getting any, but the other fellow got apples all the same, and in that way the market became overstocked, so that none of us made much, if any, profit. When the second of these experiences I found that cornering the market on apples didn't work, I let the other fellow in on our deal; each man got out of the boat when his trade demanded and the result was entirely satisfactory. I had less invested, took less risk and made more money. In the fruit business, more than in any other, it is a wise maxim not to begrudge your competitor the same degree of success that you like to enjoy yourself, especially if from his prosperity no injury results to you. In other words, the best policy in the fruit business, or, in fact, in any business, is "do as you would have others do unto you."

It will make life pleasanter for you here, and if there is a heaven where apple shippers go you will stand a better chance of getting there. Viewing this matter of proper distribution from the standpoint of an apple grower, I contend that in the long run it is better for the producers if the apple dealers make money than if they lose it. The interests of the apple dealers and the apple growers are largely mutual in their character, and if the business of the one is unprofitable for any length of time it is necessarily detrimental to the other. The apple growers need the apple dealers, and the more prosperous the latter are the better it is for the former.

By nature and instinct the average apple shipper is broad-gauged, altruistic and liberal; he has nothing of the skin-flint about him, and when he makes money he is generous and anxious to divide it with some body. Next to his family the apple grower is his best friend and will therefore come in for a share of it. I say this with confidence, for it is a fact that whenever apple dealers make good profits they are inclined to pay good prices. The good Lord made them that way and they can't help it. Hence I make the assertion that if the International Apple Shippers' Association, by co-operation and by a policy of "live and let live" between its members will bring about a more equal or proper distribution of the apple crop among its several members, so that they will all make profits instead of losses every right kind of apple grower in the country will say amen to it.

It is a well known axiom that the best customer a man can have in any line of business are those who make money on their purchases, not those who lose. Every sensible and fair minded apple grower realizes this and would prefer to hear the apple shippers talk about the profits they made instead of listening to tales of woe concerning their losses. As I have stated on a former occasion there is no over production of apples in the United States and probably never will be, no matter what croakers may say to the contrary. It is my opinion, and the opinion of all serving men generally, that with proper distribution of what can largely be brought about by such organizations as this, business of the grower and the dealer can and should be one of profit and not of losses. With the increase of population in this country, and the constantly growing demand for American apples in foreign countries I predict a great future for the apple shippers and the apple growers. All that is required to meet modern conditions in this progressive age is organization and co-operation. As an illustration of what organization and co-operation will do in the fruit business I deem it proper to mention that the strawberry growers of Missouri and Arkansas, by reason of operating through the Ozark Fruit Growers' Association during the past season sold at 25 per cent. more for their crop this year than they did last, and weather conditions were about the same; and this was all due to proper distribution. No markets for any particular house in the several markets were at any time overstocked as was formerly the case. By this arrangement, the commission men and dealers faced better than usual and financial results to them were more satisfactory.

What organization has done in securing railroad and refrigerating regulations is too well known to require elaboration. But I repeat, the most important thing to accomplish by such organizations, be they composed of dealers or growers, is a more even distribution of the apple and all other fruit crops to insure more profitable results to the parties interested. If this object will be accomplished as far as it is possible, through the International Apple Shippers' Association, its existence will be a great benefit and a lasting blessing, not only to the men engaged in the business, but to all who follow the noble calling of horticulture.

Three Jurors Cured. Mr. J. W. Fowler of Hightower, Ala., relates an experience he had while serving on a petit jury in a murder case at Edwardsville, county seat of Cleburne county, Alabama. He says: "While there I ate some fresh meat and some cold chicken. I had a cholera morbus every seven days. I never was more comfortable than when I was sent to the drug store to buy a bottle of Chamberlain's Colic, Cholera and Diarrhoea Remedy. I was saying that he had cured me, and that this medicine would cure me, when he would rather fix me than cure me. It was better in

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