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☞ Don't wait for me to levy on your property, and advertise it, but make prompt settlement and avoid extra costs.

34-tf THOMAS J. FLETCHER, Sheriff.

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R. H. COLLINS, T. D. BOWERS
EDITORS.

SATURDAY, MAY 9, 1903.

Eastern Shore Tomato Crop.

It has Become an Important Item in That Section of the State.

GROWERS BECOMING MORE INDEPENDENT AND MAKING DEMANDS OF THE CANNERS.

The tomato crop on the Eastern Shore has taken the place of the peach crop as a money maker, and in every section it is now the absorbing topic to the farmers, not to speak of the hundreds of canners who, in the last two years, have made fortunes, smaller or larger, out of the business.

As a matter of fact, the canning industry appears to offer the greatest returns for capital and exertion in the whole field of Eastern Shore commercial and manufacturing activity, and in consequence the established packers are extending their operations, and, judging from the number of new enterprises that are announced, the ranks of these will be doubled this summer and fall. In every county, from Somerset to Cecil, the interest and stir in the packing trade is almost uniform, and it is only a slight exaggeration of the real situation to say that every crossroads on the shore is likely to have a cannery of its own when the time comes to pull the red ripe fruit from the vines in the fields and "patches" of the nine counties.

For some weeks the contract season has been on, and it is impossible to estimate how many thousands of acres the growers have bound themselves to plant. These contracts were formerly religiously regarded by the growers in the days when they were chiefly dependent for the sale of tomatoes upon the packers. Some of the latter, however, as perhaps was natural when they had everything their own way, were not altogether as considerate to the other parties to the contract as they should have been, and in many little ways annoyed them and caused them loss of time and money. One leading example of this was the practice of delaying the unloading of the growers' wagons at the canning houses and preventing them from reaping the full advantage of their product by enabling them to promptly pick and deliver tomatoes.

JUMPING CONTRACTS.

Two years ago, when the crop was short and the demands for future delivery of canned goods enormous, many growers in Dorchester, Caroline and other peninsular counties "jumped" their contracts and began coining money by shipping their tomatoes to Baltimore and other points, and selling them at price double or treble that fixed by the packers in their agreements, written and parole. It was generally supposed at first that the packers had only the legal remedy of suing for damages for breach of contract, but the evil became so dangerous to their financial interests—the more so as most of the offending growers were of a class from whom the recovery of the pecuniary damages was a matter of extreme uncertainty, and the packers themselves were under contracts of delivery of their output at prices which left them little margin for making up a deficiency in their consignments—that relief was sought in equity. A test case was made up and carried before Chief Judge James Alfred Pearce of the second judicial circuit, and, to the joy of the petitioners, he decreed specific performance, and held that the oft-decided doctrine of "government by injunction" could be applied to the recalcitrant growers. This meant that the courts could assume jurisdiction of tomato crops and appoint receivers to see that fruit grown under contract reached the packers for whom it was destined at the time of planting. This practically ended the "jumping" for that season and prevented any alarming degree of it last year. Associate Judge Lloyd in the Dorchester court, decided a case in line with the views held by Judge Pearce, so that the courts in both the judicial circuits on the Eastern Shore joined in applying the remedy by injunction against "jumpers"—a novel and important departure in Maryland law.

FORM OF CONTRACT.

The approved form of contract now in use recites that A. B. (grower) agrees to plant so many acres of tomatoes on a certain farm and to deliver the "ripened product of the same in good merchantable condition at the packing house" of C. D. (packer) at a fixed price; to sell none of the product of the said acres to other parties nor to grow on the said farm tomatoes for sale to other parties. The contract further minutely describes all the conditions under which tomatoes are to be delivered, and the making of payment therefore, and releases the packer from obligation in case his cannery is destroyed by fire. The ruling price accepted by the growers is $8 a ton, an increase of $2 over the prevailing figure a few years ago. There are numerous growers, however, who have declined to sign contracts. Last year, in many instances tomatoes the season through brought from $10 to $16 a ton in the city markets, and those growers who were under contract became impressed with the fact that they were losing money. In consequence the ironclad contracts offered them this year met with but little favor. Most packers modified them so as to remove the restrictions on acreage and outside sales. Others acceded to the plan of paying by the basket instead of the ton—a plan which the growers much prefer. Many of them stood out for fourteen and fifteen cents a basket, or about $8.50 or $9 00 a ton, and got it. The spirit of combination spread among them also, and in different localities they organized miniature "trusts" of their own to set and maintain prices. Many growers have preferred to take their chances in the open market during the season.

THE CROP OUTLOOK.

Should the weather prove favorable, the tomato production on the Eastern Shore this year will be enormous. To some students of the situation the demand for canned fruits shows no signs of lessening, and they predict a rich harvest for both the grower and the canner. But pessimists are not lacking who say that the business is being overdone, and that those engaged in it will be lucky if they do not meet dire disaster. They point to the well known fact that for years some of the leading packers struggled along under a load of debt, and think these would be wise not to risk their rich gains of the past two or three years in enlarged ventures. It is a common, and of course, perfectly disinterested, comment of packers that the growers have lost their heads in contemplating the reported "gold mind" in the canning business, and that it may well be the case, even this year, that the market will be glutted, and those farmers who have scorned the sure thing of the contracts will be glad to have the packers take their output at any old price. Meantime, however, both sides are going ahead with their preparations on such a scale of magnitude as to leave the impression that the golden eggs of the tomato goose are not regarded by them as being in any real danger of ceasing from the untimely taking off of that excellent agricultural and commercial fowl.

GROWERS BECOMING INDEPENDENT.

It is apparent that the grower is becoming very independent, not only from his attitude toward the tomato contract and his evident determination in past seasons to get all he could out of the crop, but also from the study he is giving the profits of the canner. When tomatoes were $6 a ton and the packers wanted the price put down to $5—the grower says he was not making any money. He says the same of $8 a ton, and is more than disposed to go into the packing business himself. There are several ingenious men on the Eastern Shore who have stepped into the breach between grower and packer with inventions which they extol with all the fervency of Col. Mulberry Sellers, and with a hard-headed practicality which was foreign to that enthusiast These inventions are "portable" canners' outfit for packing on a scale that admits of much extension. It is said that with one of these outfits, costing $50, a grower-canner can make $1000 in the season, and these are some of the figures given: A basket of tomatoes will make ten cans, and this basket of raw stock, for which the packer thinks fifteen cents is a high price, is worth seventy five cents in the canned state; a ton of tomatoes thus footing up at present prices for canned goods, about $55.

The adviser who furnishes this glimpse at possibilities argues that there is nothing in growing tomatoes for the packing houses; that the tenant's other work suffers when he is engrossed in harvesting this crop, and that his part of the profits is more than offset by his labor; that the landlord sinks his profit in fertilizer for the crop and his loss in other crops, and the same applies to the grower who owns his own farm. On the other hand, the grower who contracts and gets cash will have something to the good next fall, in view of the liklihood of an "overdone" business. The holder of these sentiments denies that the packers are making undue profits, and says these purchasers of tomatoes and employers of labor are the chief factors in county development, and offer the growers all that the market for canned goods justifies for their crop. He figures that it costs a packer, in raw stock, cans and material, insurance, interest on investment and pay roll 71¼ cents to pack a dozen cans of tomatoes, for which the present market price of 95 cents, less discount and commission, nets him 72 1-3 cents, while a farmer raises 200 baskets an acre at a cost of $25.03 and nets $1.63 2-3. If his acre produces 500 baskets his profit is $34.13 at $8 a ton. From both these standpoints the question is now being discussed exhaustively, "Pro Bono Publico" and other well known and authoritative citizens having taken it up with ardor in the columns of the Eastern Shore papers.

MAY BE LIKE PEACH CROP.

A peculiar feature of the tomato crop is that its behavior is giving good grounds for believing that it will run the course of the peach crop, and there are not wanting agriculturists of experience and standing who assert that within a short period, the tomato, like the peach, will cease to be profitably grown hereabouts, and that it will be transferred from the Eastern Shore and from Maryland to another locality, just as the peach has been. Tomatoes soon wear out the land, it is said, and cannot be successfully raised even in rotation on the same ground. Ten tons or 600 baskets, is now looked upon as an extraordinary yield, and five tons is thought to be a good average. However, the "tomato liar" is classed with the old-time "peach liar," and few of the growers and packers who are now hard at work in expectation of a continuance of the tomato boom are troubled about an early end of tomato selling. While it is yet day, so to speak, they are satisfied.

A Case of Precedence.

Senator George F. Hoar, the venerable Senator from Massachusetts, who has played so serious a part in the Upper House, has moments of clever small talk that make his wit as much appreciated in the drawing-rooms as in debate.

One of the delightful things he said was at a large formal dinner at the White House. As the guests were leaving the receiving-room the Hon. Charles Emory Smith was just in front of Senator Hoar. The ex-Cabinent Minister at once stepped aside and insisted that the Senator from Massachusetts precede. There was a moment's polite parleying while Mr. Smith argued that a man in the Senate should precede an ex Cabinent Minister.

"Ah, no," said Senator Hoar, bowing. "The X's precede the Y's" (wise.)

Who was Aesop?

Aesop, the celebrated Greek fabulist of the sixth century, B. C., of whose history little is known except that he was originally a slave, manumitted by Iadmon of Somas, and put to death by Delphians, probably for some witticism at their expense.

Not to be Contradicted.

"Honesty is the best policy," said Senator Sorghum.

"But that little transaction" protested the confidential associate.

"Well-er-the other man's honesty turned out to be the best policy for me, didn't it?"—Washington Star.

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