An Extensive Industry.

The question of price is now being seriously considered by tomato-growers and packers throughout the Maryland and Delaware Peninsula. Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester, and growers in some other counties, have taken formal action, declaring that tomatoes cannot be grown at a profit for $6 per ton, and Kent tomato-growers have the matter under consideration. On the other hand, the packers state that with old stock of canned goods still on hand, and the great number of canneries already established and ready to commence operations the first moment that prices will warrant, it is impossible for the packer to risk one cent more than $5 per ton.

A prominent packer said today: "The financial depression has struck at the very heart of the canning industry on the Peninsula. The tomato is one of the cheapest, most wholesome and most largely used of all canned vegetables by the great masses of people, particularly the working classes, and the trouble is they have not the money to indulge in this comparative luxury when sold at a price corresponding to $5 per ton. Then too, these conditions prevailing, it has been an easy matter to overstock the market with this particular canned product a nd prices have ruled low. During the past six years the tomato-growing and packing industry has reached enormous proportions on the Peninsula, and during several seasons of peach crop failure have been almost the financial salvation of many Kent county farmers. During the great peach-growing fever which swept over this section thousands and tens of thousands of acres of the finest grain-growing and agricultural lands in the county were planted down in trees. The success or failure of the Kent county farmers depended upon the success or failure of the peach crop. Because of sudden climatic changes the crop became uncertain; when crops came prices ruled low. and finally the yellows set in, grain prices continued to shrink until the tomato came in as the worthy successor, to a great extent, of the old crops, or at least to bridge over total or partial failure of other fruits or grains. Price started at $8 per ton, and in some cases even slightly more was received; seasons were favorable, the prices were richly profitable, and the tomato industry, like the silk-worm fever, swept everything before it."

Your correspondent, in view of the discussion of the question of prices, has gathered from reliable sources the extent of this industry in Kent county during one season and throughout the Peninsula during the year 1895, with the following results: Chestertown had 255 acres in tomatoes, Quaker Neck 200 acres, Rock Hall 125 acres, Millington 350 acres, Turner's Creek 225, Galena 75 acres, Crumpton 250 acres, Lynch's 150 acres, Worton Point 100 acres, Still Pond and Betterton 225 acres, Harris's Wharf 100 acres, Worton Station 175 acres, or a total in the county of 2,357 acres. Putting the average yield at eight tons, not an extravagant estimate, many farmers growing from ten to fifteen tons and some even more, we have a grand total of 18,856 tons of tomatoes as the crop of Kent county for a single season. Reducing this to dollars and cents and placing the price per ton at $6, the price demanded by growers this year, a compromise between the original price of $7 and $5, the price paid in some instances last year, we have the handsome total of $113,136 as the estimated value of the Kent county tomato crop, placing Kent possibly at the head of the list of tomato growing counties on the Eastern Shore. C. M. Marshall, secretary of the Peninsula Canned Goods Association, makes the statement that there are in the Peninsula tomato-growing counties 120 canneries. Ninety-four of this number packed the fruit from 20,002 acres, putting up a total of 1,255,700 cases of three-pound cans. The average acreage to each cannery was 212⅔; average number of cases per acre 62¾.

The above figures, particularly those refering to Kent county, clearly demonstrate the important relation which tomato culture and the packing interest bear to the financial prosperity of the county and this section of the State. The blight, which made its appearance in this county last year, threatened to be a serious drawback to future crops unless some remedy can be found and promptly applied. With this vast interest to be affected, there is little wonder that tomato prices are an important matter with Peninsula farmers.—*Chestertown Correspondence of the Sun.*

No. 212

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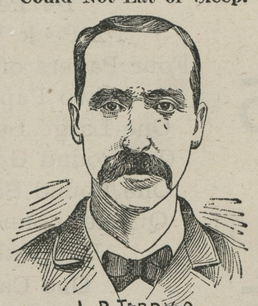
Wretched.

Could Not Eat or Sleep.



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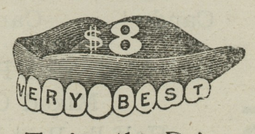

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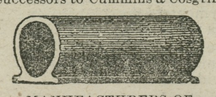

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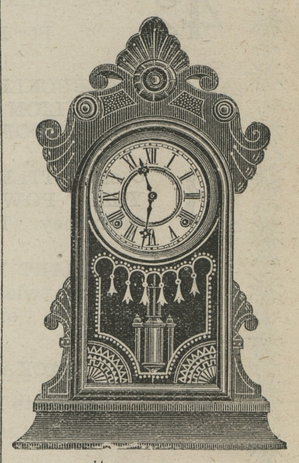

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