



CO-OPERATION AMONG FARMERS.

A REVIEW OF THE SUBJECT.

The individual farmer is at the mercy of organized buyers, shippers and transportation companies. Standing alone, he cannot say what the price of his goods shall be nor can he modify the transportation charges, be they ever so exorbitant. Yet as a producer of various foodstuffs and other necessities of life the farmer is entitled to a living wage and fair profit. If under the present system of marketing it be regarded as a fair policy for organized buyers to fix the price of farm products so that they pay little more than the cost of production, and sometimes not even that, then it is a fairer proposition for producers to aim to get together with a view of maintaining a price for their goods that shall at least pay the cost of production, interest on invested capital and a just profit. This is what co-operative marketing among farmers has aimed to do.

One of the latest champions of the farmers' right to co-operate and of the advantages to be derived therefrom is Prof. John L. Coulter, of the University of Minnesota, who is now acting as agricultural expert in the Bureau of the Census at Washington. His recent book, *Co-operation Among Farmers*, is styled the keystone of rural prosperity. He emphasizes that what the farmer wants, ought to have and will seek to obtain by every legitimate means is a just reward for his labor and invested capital. In the present state of organized society the lone farmer stands helpless, but standing shoulder to shoulder with his neighbors who are engaged in the production of similar goods the individual farmer has the opportunity to help himself to a better financial condition.

TYPES OF CO-OPERATION.

In other words, the co-operative movement among farmers has enabled them to have something to say as to the price of their products, to market them to better advantage, and to secure better transportation facilities and cheaper rates. These results are confined to no one line of agriculture; they are shown to have been achieved by farmers engaged in

the co-operative marketing of butter, cheese, meat animals, grain, vegetables, poultry, eggs, citrus and other fruits, and nuts. Moreover, the advantages and success of co-operative stores for farmers and rural communities as conducted in Minnesota and several neighboring States, where membership is growing at the rate of 500 a month, convince Professor Coulter "that during the next few years there will be hundreds of these stores organized, and that these will be connected with a co-operative wholesale society."

In Europe co-operative buying organizations among farmers are quite numerous and have been very successful. They bring various advantages to farmers, such as cheaper prices, better goods, lower shipping rates and the saving of time and labor on the part of the members as a result of buying in bulk the feeds, fertilizers and other materials used by farmers. In buying, our American farmers have not been very active and we have but few successful examples of such work.

The aim of co-operation is to make farmers better business men and better farmers. "Without these we cannot have better living, and we must have this better living in the open country, or the movement to the cities will not stop and farming will be looked down upon and scorned." But co-operation does more than this. It removes the feeling of distrust and suspicion all too common among farmer neighbors, increases the opportunity for social intercourse through the regular meetings of the organization, raises the standard of products, lowers the cost of production, increases the selling price of goods and teaches better methods of marketing. Professor Coulter goes even farther: he recommends the erection of local storage plants and the co-operative control of factories for the canning, preservation and manufacture of the more perishable fruits, vegetables and dairy products. While telling farmers that they ought to organize and how to go about it, he cautions them not to think that the co-operative society is a cure-all for every ill of the farming industry.—The Country Gentleman.