

THE..... HARVESTER COMBINE.

II.—The Manufacturers' Viewpoint.

By PHIL. GODFREY.

THE farm implement manufacturers of New Zealand have for many years maintained a satisfactory business record in their dealings with the farming community; and it is probably due to the eternal unfitness of some things that the mutual benefit resulting to both parties should have recently been threatened with extinction. This unfitness becomes an ugly contretemps when held to be analogous to the operations of the Harvester Combine in our midst, and the local manufacturers in justice to themselves and their patrons, have lately put their case before the country in a clear and succinct manner. They have endeavoured to invoke the co-operation of the farmer, in order that combined advances might prove the ultimate means of checking, if not of eradicating, the Combine's inroads on an important colonial industry. So far, this justifiable move has not been productive of as general and spontaneous an understanding as was at first expected by the people who were far-seeing enough to take the initiative. Nevertheless, both manufacturers and farmers met a few days ago in Christchurch, and they discussed the question with a degree of finality to their deliberations sufficient to induce the Government to acknowledge that emergency legislation would be necessary in event of the Combine becoming unduly arbitrary in its operations.

This was, of course, non-committing and placatory enough on the part of a paternal legislature, which goes slowly in so-called party matters, but the provision, we must admit, savours too much of coping with an improbable contingency, instead of dealing with the instant imposition of duty as the only protection against the Trust. However, it is well to note that the manufacturers place every confidence in the Government, and that when the time arrives they will, with the farmers supporting them, derive the maximum protection for a trade which must certainly rank in the forefront of colonial enterprise.

To prove that our manufacturers have no wish to increase prices it has only to be stated that they do not ask for the levying of duty on those implements which cannot be manufactured in the colony, viz:—harvesters, hay-making machinery, traction and oil engines, dairy machinery, and implements such as small ploughs and cultivators, upon which any duty would necessarily raise the price; but they merely move for assistance to protect those machines which they have brought to their present pitch of perfection, viz:—ploughs, tine and disc harrows, cultivators, drills, rollers, chaff-cutters, and seed-cleaners, and on these they stipulate for protection when they reduce their prices.

Thus, for every £1 reduction on a price the manufacturers claim that there should be a corresponding imposition of £4 duty, except in the case of implements and machinery which are the products of the United Kingdom. This latter condition, is, of course, a further guarantee of fair dealing, and British machines would, consequently, be admitted free as at present.

Then again, the manufacturers are perfectly willing to standardise their machines, so that any alteration of quality could be readily detected. If, under these circumstances, the manufacturers did not keep faith with the consumers then the law of the land could be amended to meet the disabilities of the question; but the whole subject of patriotic-cum-economic consideration is so wrapped up in the mutual agreement of manufacturers and farmers, that any departure from strictly fair practice on their respective parts would undoubtedly give the Harvester Combine the advantage it can never otherwise obtain.

It is, then, little to be marvelled at that the manufacturers recently invited the co-operation of the farmers in order to deal summarily with what is unquestionably to be the topic of the hour ere another session commences. To the farmers of New Zealand they addressed themselves in the following unmistakable terms, viz:—

We ask your support on the following grounds:—

You prevent the possibility of a foreign monopoly taking the place of the present colonial competition.

You will secure an immediate reduction in the price of colonial implements.

You will secure better machinery because colonial makers will secure some of the trade now done by the foreigners.

Owing to the increase in the number of men employed you will secure an enlarged local demand for your products.

Less money will be spent on canvassers and more on the implement itself.

In consideration of this support's forthcoming it must be distinctly understood that the manufacturers' *modus vivendi* would be as follows:—

1. All harvesting, hay, threshing and dairy machinery to be free, as now.
2. All agricultural machinery from England to be free.
3. Machinery used by small farmers, that would be likely to be raised in price, to be free.
4. Duties only to be placed on the kinds of implements which colonial makers have worked up to suit colonial requirements, and on these only when prices have been reduced.
5. No alteration in price would at any time be effected unless it carried a compensating consideration for the farmer.

A fear has been expressed by many farmers that, if the leech-like Combine were interfered with, it might create difficulties by refusing to supply those machines which are popularly supposed to be made only by the International Harvester Company. But such a contingency is the last thing to occur when it is remembered that in reapers and binders—the so-called speciality of the Trust—the farmer can have alternative access to one of the finest machines in the world, viz:—the "Hornsby." This machine has an extremely good record in England and Australia for durability and lightness of draught, and the recent exhibits of harvesting machinery at the Christchurch show would have been lacking in comprehensiveness had two fine "Hornsby" harvesters not been there to represent British workmanship and industrial advance.

In conclusion we require to place on record the fact that the farmer and manufacturer, if left quietly to their own common spheres of buyer and seller, will work out the disposal of monopoly in good time. In past years the two parties have got on well together, giving and taking in many

things; and it is not now to be supposed that an arbitrary action on the part of one will upset the good feeling that has before existed, but rather let us believe that their careful weighing of the pros and cons of the subject will tend all the more to a firmer cementing of individual interests when the time arrives for concerted action.

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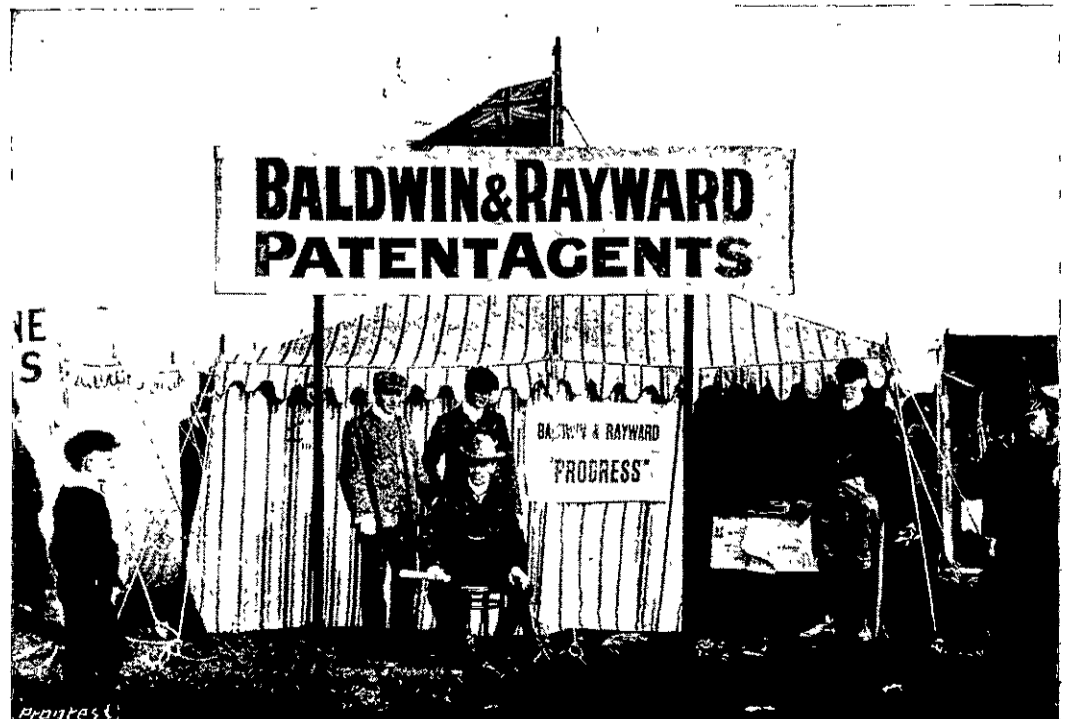
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