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EDITORIAL.

MISDIRECTED CRITICISM.

The safeguard of a democracy is wide-open publicity in all public departments, and intelligent criticism thereof. The criticism, however, should be free from personal animus, and should always be fair. In the recent hog controversy, running through the agricultural press, there have been several volleys levelled at Prof. G. E. Day, of the Ontario Agricultural College, which, while they probably have been free from personal animosity, have certainly not been fair. From the tone of a few of them, one would infer that Prof. Day was regarded by the writers as a sort of decoy in league with the treacherous pork-packers, to beguile unsuspecting farmers into a "skin game." We do not suppose that anyone in Canada who knows him does actually regard him in this light, but such would be the impression created by the letters of certain hog-raisers who have been rushing into print. Unpracticed correspondents frequently pen, on the spur of a momentary impulse, words which they afterwards recognize as being far from reflecting their real sober opinions. It is a good plan, when writing letters for publication, especially on controversial subjects, to draft them out, lay them aside for a week to cool off, and then rewrite. Undiluted wisdom flows fluently through few pens.

Without going into the details of the hog question on this occasion, suffice to say that we doubt whether there is in the Dominion of Canada a more honorable, whole-souled body of men than those connected with agriculture in one or another professional capacity, and among this splendid corps of men, probably none enjoys a better-deserved reputation for integrity, judgment and reliability than the popular agriculturist and animal-husbandry man at the Ontario Agricultural College. Perhaps it is a compliment to these attributes that he has become a target for criticism, for certainly the advice given in the article which drew out all this controversy was precisely in line with that given editorially and otherwise by nearly all the sanest thinkers in the country. The unwisdom of rushing precipitately out of a certain branch of farming merely because profits are temporarily contracted, is attested by volumes of evidence and every consideration of business sagacity. For all we can see, the prospects are still bright for a substantial rise in hog values within the next twelvemonth. Just how soon the scale was to turn, no one could possibly forecast, and the wisest prophet is ever liable to err; but, in view of all the circumstances, the advice tendered by Prof. Day was indubitably sound, while its candor and disinterestedness was above question.

One other point. There appears to be a current opinion that at a Government property it should be possible to secure better and more economical results than on an ordinary farm. This is a great mistake. From personal experience and observation at such public institutions, we are positively persuaded that, given equal men in each case, the owner of the private farm will be able to beat the other four times out of five. In the first place, a small herd of swine or other stock will almost always do better than a large one. In the second place, on a private farm the stock and feeding operations are more liable to receive that strict personal oversight and attention to individuality and detail that bulks as so large a factor in the equation of

success. In the third place, on a private farm, the cost of production can be often reduced by the utilization of what would otherwise be waste products, provided only a reasonable amount of stock is maintained. This does not exhaust the catalogue of reasons, but will afford thought-food for would-be hasty critics, and is useful as explaining why cost of production figures deduced from experiments at a station or college should be capable of more or less paring in judiciously-conducted commercial enterprise.

PREPARATION FOR SPRING WORK.

Now that winter has well-nigh spent its force, the progressive farmer will devote his attention to preparing for field work before the land is ready for cultivation. The utilization of every hour to the best advantage when the ground is dry enough to work may mean the difference between a good crop and a partial failure, since, as a rule, the early-sown seed makes the strongest growth, and insures the most abundant yield. Moreover, the chances of a successful seeding to clover and grass are much better when the grain is sown early. In order that they may do their best work, and most of it, the teams, harness and tools should be in the best condition, the horses well fed and groomed, and given sufficient exercise to harden their muscles and impart strength and endurance. When put to heavy work, it will pay well in the long run to give them a few easy days at first, increasing the labor only as they are able to do it easily. Bathing the shoulders in the evening with salt water will tend to toughen them and prevent abrasions. The harness should be taken apart, washed and oiled, and the implements of cultivation overhauled, repaired and sharpened, to be in condition for the most effective work. The cultivator with dull points, which does good enough work in soft, loose land, may slide along near the surface on the hard hill-tops, leaving only an inch or less of loose soil for the seed-bed, while the same implement, if sharpened, will break up and pulverize four or five inches of the earth, making a difference of many bushels to the acre in the yield, and insuring a uniform appearance and return from all parts of the field, and an even ripening for the harvest, avoiding loss from shelling in the overripe portions while waiting for the more backward to mature.

The selection, securing, testing and preparation of the seed in good time is also important. Only sound seed of the most suitable variety for the district, well cleaned to screen out weed seeds and small grains, should be sown, and, in case of any doubt as to the vitality of the seed, testing it by some simple means in the house before seeding time arrives may avoid disappointment and loss. A simple way to test the seed of cereals for germination is to count out a hundred representative grains, place them on a dampened, dark, woollen cloth in the bottom of an ordinary plate, put another cloth on top, and invert a second plate over the other. Keep the cloths damp, but do not drown the seeds with moisture. By the number of grains that sprout, and by their promptness in doing so, the germinating quality is determined. With good strong, vital seed, there will often be from seventy-five to one hundred seeds germinated in the first four days; but with seed of weak vitality, there may be little sign of germinating in this time, though a considerable percentage of it may start later. It

is, of course, very important to sow seed of strong vitality, with a high percentage of germination, say 95 to 100 per cent., but, when inferior seed has to be sown, allowance should be made in the quantity sown per acre.

It is also very important to sow seed from a crop fairly free of smut and other fungous diseases, but if there was the least sign of smut noticeable last summer, the seed should, as a precaution, be treated to destroy the smut spores. All things considered, sprinkling with a solution of formalin is the most commendable method. Spread the grain out on the barn floor, and sprinkle till quite moist with a solution of a pound of formalin (a pound is a little less than a pint) in thirty-two to thirty-five gallons of water. Shovel over a few times, applying the solution while the shovelling is being done. When all is done, shovel the grain into a conical heap and cover with old blankets for two or three hours. Then remove the blankets and spread the grain out to dry. It is better not to treat more grain at a time than will be sown within about three days. Avoid using the solution of a strength much in excess of this prescription, else the vitality of the kernel may be weakened.

Along with the grain, use clover seed liberally. Seed down with every acre of white-straw grain crop, except, perhaps, an occasional piece to be prepared for fall wheat. Clover seed at its dearest is a wonderful bargain. Supposing the seed were \$15 a bushel, a seeding of ten pounds per acre, which is not too much as a general thing, would cost only \$2.50 per acre. This will not only provide a large amount of much more valuable feed than timothy, but will be the means of adding to the farm fertility the equivalent of ten to twenty tons of manure per acre. Red clover, 8 pounds; alsike, 2 pounds, and timothy, 4 pounds, is a seeding hard to improve upon from the standpoint of genuine, intelligent economy. Even when plowed up in the fall, the addition and saving of fertility from a good catch of clover will equal from five to ten tons of manure per acre. There certainly is no other way of building up a farm so cheaply as by the liberal use of clover, alfalfa and peas.

Other suggestions could be multiplied at length. Preparations for fencing should be hastened at once. Fence off the wood-lot this spring, and keep out all stock. It is the means of insuring a handsome future revenue from what has been too long regarded as a waste portion of the farm. Plant some trees about the farm, and on the waste or rough places, rows of them along the lanes and roadways, groves of evergreens north and west of the buildings, with deciduous trees artistically arranged to the south and east. Get the summer's wood ready, neatly piled in the shed. Straighten up about the farm, renew and reseed the lawn if necessary, plant a few vines and shrubs, buy a spray pump and spray the orchards and potatoes according to instructions annually given in our spray calendar. Get a couple of four-horse eveners ready, so as to save the time of the extra man formerly considered necessary. A good farmer of our acquaintance used always to have a couple of extra dobtletrees, whiffletrees, neckyokes, clevises, trace tugs and all such contrivances on hand to substitute for a broken one without serious loss of time. Have on hand a liberal supply of machine oil, and use it liberally. Oil is cheaper than castings. Foresight and business prudence are requisite attributes of the successful farmer of to-day. Now is the time to plan and think.