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# The Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine

"Persevere and Succeed."

Established 1866.

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## EDITORIAL.

### Wanted: Good Roads.

Readers of "The Farmer's Advocate" throughout many sections of the Province of Ontario will agree with us that during this season the roads have been notoriously bad. In dry summer and autumn weather, or in winter when frost and snow cover a multitude of municipal sins, both of omission and commission, the highways are passable, but when subjected to the test of continued soft, wet weather, then the things that are rotten in road construction and maintenance become glaringly apparent, and rural traffic suffers a partial paralysis, to the great loss and discomfort of the farmer. Bad roads are a heavy drain upon the resources of the farm, and one of the very greatest hindrances to its progress. People may become hardened to them, as they do to other evils, but that makes them none the less objectionable. We very much question if there is a point at which municipal management has more signally broken down than in the construction and maintenance of the highways. If anybody disputes this, or desires evidence that will settle or unsettle his "hash," let him start out after the next thaw, at a venture, on some of the township or county roads in one of the old and wealthy counties—Peel or Middlesex, for example—and we venture to affirm that he will be convinced, if, indeed, he does not perish in a sea of mud.

Badly laid out, imperfectly drained, and ill-constructed in the first place, the roads evidently were in most cases, and now there seems to be no systematic oversight or policy of maintenance. Many of the roadbeds are too wide, and instead of having a crown to shed the water, they are flat, if not actually hollow, in the center. In many municipalities it is simply a policy of drift. Nothing is done until the road becomes a veritable bog, and then repairs are doled out with a niggardly hand. Gravel, if used, is very frequently of a most inferior character, containing a liberal admixture of soil or muck, and is dumped on, only to be washed away into the ditches and streams at an early date, finding itself back into the original riverbed, ready once more for the contractors who thrive upon the corporation. Cases are cited where the deservedly-condemned statute-labor system was voted out and the taxes commuted, but the last evil is even worse than the first, for, more than ever, it is now a go-as-you-please system of road oversight and work. Once in six or eight years the road grader makes its appearance, and in a spirit of self-preservation the ratepayers are forced to take some sort of care of the highways themselves during the interval. Gravel is piled on loosely for wagons and horses to roll down, to which the people would not so strenuously object were it not for the outrageous proportion of boulders that should have gone through the stone crusher before being laid on the roadbed. The taxes are high enough in all conscience, but the people will not kick at the taxes, if they get good value in the shape of roads to travel over to mill, and market, and factory. Provincial Treasurers boast of revenues and surpluses, and a progressive railroad policy for New Ontario. Our readers would like to hear a little more of the good-roads propaganda in Old Ontario. If the Ontario Government wishes to make a name for itself, let it concentrate on the good-roads policy and strengthen the hands of the Provincial Highway Commissioner. In no direction can it so well and directly serve the interests of the farmer. We commend to the Government the adoption of a liberal good-roads policy.

### "Far-off Fields Look Green!"

The letter by Mr. John Campbell, on the depopulation of Western Ontario, should arrest more than passing notice, for his observations are in greater or less measure applicable to a large part of Eastern Canada, though they apply with particular force to certain Ontario counties, which, so far as natural conditions go, are unexcelled by any farming district. We need not dwell upon the conditions so graphically described; suffice to say our observation coincides closely with that of Mr. Campbell, who, as a Farmers' Institute lecturer and live-stock judge, has become acquainted with them by close observation.

What are the reasons for the exodus that has taken place? Inquiry reveals that thousands of the people have gone West. Farm after farm of the finest of land has been sold to rich neighbors, to be seeded down to cattle pasture. Choice districts have lost nearly half their human population, and the ranching business, it would seem, was being transferred from Alberta to Ontario. Some months ago, returning from a trip through North Middlesex and Lambton, we were reflecting on the fact that, just as Ontario had long been incredulous regarding the possibilities of the West, and had left it largely to Americans to reveal that country to us, so had we now gone to the other extreme, and in the height of the Western fever, which seems to have affected public men, press, manufacturers, farmers and laborers alike, were forgetting splendid opportunities right here in our own Province. As we looked out over the broad, fertile fields, presenting scarcely any obstacles to cultivation, and offering a bounteous harvest of good things to the man who could work them aright, the conviction seized us that a reaction must come soon, the people would awake to the blessings of this home land, and a repatriation, ere many years, would bring back the wheat-land seekers in thousands, along with a proportion of city men. These will impart to agriculture in Old Ontario a new uplift, for immigrants give to a country the feeling of prosperity, the basis of hope, and the impulse of progress. We have no objection to the partial peopling of the West by Eastern Canadians. Some are needed there as a leaven on the masses of foreigners who are swarming into that country, but it seems as though the wholesale migration is going too far for the good of Ontario, and for the good of many of the immigrants.

We do not appreciate the East, nor the opportunities that abound to make it a delightful land to live in. The great mass of the people never have appreciated it, as is proven by the vandalism with which they have sacrificed the woodland, one of its chief natural charms. The people who resettle it will possess a partially despoiled country, which they will improve. Where once the forest was ruthlessly hewn away trees will be planted; rows of them will mark the highways, groves of them protect the buildings, and belts of them, unpastured and thrifty, will adorn the landscape and ameliorate the climate, at the same time yielding in timber as large a revenue as the cultivated fields. Rough, broken lands will be re-clothed in forest, seeded to lucerne or to permanent pasture. Underdraining will be done, obstacles to cultivation removed, that work may be accomplished with ease and expedition, as in the West. Corn and clover will enrich the land with a fragrant prosperity, horticulture will flourish, likewise dairying and other phases of intensive agriculture, our farms will be doubled or trebled in production, and our homes made more beautiful. No country in the world lends itself more generously to the mixed-husbandman's effort, and the present cattle ranges will be re-transformed into a blossoming country of homes.

Ontario has every natural requisite of a great farming country. It is a beautiful land to live in, and can be infinitely improved. It has a rich, retentive soil, that can be made richer by a system of mixed husbandry, including rotation with legumes; it is well watered, having not only abundant rainfall, but plenty of pure well-water available for man and beast. These things will make it a great farming country long after the West has squandered its heritage of soil fertility, which, in that climate and under prevailing Western conditions, it will be no easy task to restore.

### Encouragement Rather than Compulsion.

It appears some misunderstanding has arisen regarding the motive which prompted the Ontario Fairs and Exhibitions Association, in convention at Toronto last month, to resolve in favor of striking out the clause in the Provincial Agriculture and Arts Act forbidding horse-racing at fall fairs. The reason for this action is the fact that the law has been practically a dead letter, the Government refusing to prosecute or even withhold the grant, private individuals being also loath to take action. Then, too, "speed contests" have been legally recognized by the Act, and, in the event of action against a society, the decision would hinge upon the court's opinion as to whether a certain event were a horse-race or a speed contest. The fact is, anyway, that the law supposed to forbid horse-racing at fairs has not prevented it, about half the societies in the Province, we believe, carrying it on without molestation. It is held by some that the law never was intended to prohibit racing, that the distinction between horse-racing and "speed contests" was a means placed in the society's hands to control their racing and eliminate the professional element. If this is the intent of the law, the fact should be clearly set forth. It is probable that a second circumstance which induced the Association to pass the resolution it did was a not-too-well-considered circular sent out by the Department of Agriculture in August, 1904, pointing out that racing was illegal, and that directors by whose sanction it was carried on were liable to fines and imprisonment. Construing this as a veiled warning, many societies who had arranged for races cancelled them. Their indignation on finding the Government had not the slightest intention of prosecution, was manifest at the meeting, and the aforementioned resolution was a very natural outcome thereof.

Many societies claim that they cannot afford to dispense with racing, though the experience of exhibitions such as Simcoe, Beachburg and Highgate is evidence that not only can fairs be run successfully without the race-track, but that the agricultural features gain much in attention of visitors by absence of distracting events. The subject cannot be fairly discussed, however without an admission that there are two sides to it, and that the first means of regulating the racing evil may not be the best advised or the most effectual in the end. There are a great many people who are keenly fond of a horse-race, and they have a right to their opinion that it is a harmless amusement. From these comes the question, "Where are we going to see a race, unless at the local fair? It is all right for the Toronto man who can take in the Woodbine to talk about the fall fair not being the place for a horse-race, but the farmer's perspective gives it a different view." We respect these people's opinions, and will go so far as to admit that a good clean horse-race is one of the least objectionable attractions that can be put on at a fair. There are, though, many evils liable to follow the race-track—evils more vividly seen on the