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and Home Magazine

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EDITORIAL.

Denatured Alcohol.

The American Senate has been considering a long-deferred bill, finally passed by the House of Representatives, to remove the internal-revenue tax from denatured alcohol, i.e., alcohol which has been rendered undrinkable by the addition of some liquid, such as the pungent and poisonous wood alcohol. Great expectations are based upon the probable effect of tax-free alcohol in cheapening fuel, light and power. One gallon of alcohol will give as much light as two gallons of kerosene in an ordinary lamp, and, the cost being about the same per gallon, its use would cut in two the expense of lighting a farmhouse. Besides this, it can be used instead of gasoline in small motors, such as are employed to run light machinery on the farms and in shops. There are over 5,000 of these alcohol engines now used in Germany. Alcohol is much less explosive than gasoline; its vapor does not take fire so readily, and the burning alcohol can be put out with water, while a gasoline fire cannot. Besides being useful for lighting, heating and power, cheap alcohol would be of great advantage to many manufactures, such as hats, varnishes, smokeless powder, photographic material, celluloid, transparent soap, and the like. Probable sources of cheap alcohol include spoiled corn and beet-sugar molasses, cheap molasses from the West Indies, and lately it has been suggested that unsalable honey, partially fermented, could be turned to good account by conversion into denatured alcohol. Moderate estimates place the probable selling price of untaxed alcohol at from 15 to 25 cents a gallon. Hitherto its cost to the consumer has been increased by an excise tax amounting to about a thousand per cent., ad valorem. The tax was first imposed in the United States in 1862, to raise money to carry on the Civil War, but has since been repeatedly increased, so that while a gallon of alcohol can be made for from 20 to 25 cents, the manufacturer has to pay the Government \$2.08 if he sells or uses it. The only exception to this is that alcohol used to fortify light wines, making them more intoxicant, is not taxed. Last year the tax was remitted on 3,500,000 gallons of alcohol used for this purpose.

That alcohol for drinking should be highly taxed, is quite right, but no such arguments apply to the denatured article, to tax which is just as absurd as it would be to tax gasoline or coal.

The subject was very thoroughly investigated by the joint committee of the Senate and House of Representatives in 1896, while a mass of reliable information is contained in the British Parliamentary Report of 1901, and in the evidence recently taken by the Ways and Means Committee of the House at Washington. The bill, however, has met stubborn opposition in the person of Senator Nelson W. Aldrich, chairman of the Senate's Finance Committee, which now has the bill in charge. Senator Aldrich is father-in-law of John Rockefeller, Jr., and is himself interested in Standard Oil. Though there is no limit to this session of Congress, except what it chooses to set, he says it is too late for any action "based upon wise principles," and, on account of "faulty" work done in the House of Representatives, he finds it necessary to have extensive hearings on the bill. Of course, the main "principle" which worries the venerable statesman is the effect of cheap alcohol on the prices charged by the Standard Oil Company for coal oil and gasoline. One other "interest," probably of much less concern to him, is the industry of manufacturing methyl alcohol, or wood alcohol, of which 7,500,000 gallons a year are now produced. As most of our

readers are aware, there are thousands of alcohols possible and hundreds known to the chemist, who gives them such names as methyl (wood alcohol), ethyl, propyl, butyl, etc. Most people are acquainted with but two: ethyl alcohol, made from fruit, grain, etc., which forms the intoxicating element of wine and whiskey, and methyl alcohol, made by the destructive distillation of wood. The latter is entirely unpotable, and therefore is not taxed. It is used for many purposes in the arts, and its production has become a great industry, owing to the prohibitive tax on its rival. On behalf of this industry, it is suggested that, for some years at least, the English standard of 10 per cent. wood alcohol be required as a denaturant, instead of the 2½ per cent. used in Germany. It is not expected that much danger will result from the general use of denatured alcohol. A few persons may try to drink it, but, as one magazine points out, they will be those dipsomaniacs who now kill themselves by drinking red ink, perfumery and liniment.

Removal of the tax on denatured alcohol has been trifled with for years, but the demand is now stronger than ever, and the bill will not be so easily shelved as formerly. Meanwhile, American farmers are being urged to write their Senators, demanding to know which side of the fence they are on, the farmers' or the Standard Oil's. It is a little way they have on the "other side" of getting their individual representatives on record, and whipping their courage up, if need be, to the point of action.

Opportunity or Man?

That there is room for improvement in farming in this country is shown by the wide difference between the best and the poorest results, or, if you will, between the best and the ordinary. Contrary to the popular assumption, this difference is not due, in the majority of cases, at any rate, to unequal chances. It is mainly a question of the man. There are opportunities going to waste on almost every farm. Just in proportion as a man realizes the fact, and sets himself to discover his own, and make the most of them, will he rise above the dreary level of average accomplishment. We need more of the spirit of a certain business man who, boring for water to supply his house, was unfortunate enough, as it was then thought, to strike a sulphurous vein which rendered the use of the water for household purposes out of the question. Instead, he built a mineral-water plant over the well, and has been coining money out of it ever since.

Can such results be duplicated in agriculture? In the County of Ontario is a farm on which there are thirty-five or forty acres of steep clay hills along a stream on the east side of the farm. For years they were worked as many other acres of such land is worked—at a measly profit, if, indeed, there were any profit at all. An enterprising man secured the farm, and seeded the hills to permanent pasture. The spring-fed stream furnished an ideal watering-place for stock, and to-day that portion of the farm is as profitable as any. Similar land across the line fence has long since had its surface soil washed towards the lake, but still the tenant wrestles with the blue-clay knolls. Is it a difference of opportunities or a difference of men? Down in New Brunswick is a large area of land that is light, and has long been half-tilled by men whose energy was spent in the lumber woods. One man in particular, finding it necessary to depend more largely upon the farm for a living, subscribed for a couple of farm papers, and began to study improved methods of dairying. With a very ordinary farm, and handicapped by sickness in the family and by a heavy debt, he built his faith

upon the dairy cow. In a comparatively few years he doubled his herd, gathered implements about him, built a silo, paid for his place, and has a snug bank account besides.

Was it opportunity or man?

A Course in Roadmaking at Guelph.

Last week a correspondent complained of the lack of competent highway engineers in Ontario, and suggested the establishment of a course in roadmaking at the School of Practical Science, Toronto, where the best ideas in Europe, as well as America, could be taught systematically, with a view to turning out experts whose knowledge could be diffused and utilized by the community. We believe the idea is good, but as the matter of roads is mainly a farmers' problem, why not have the subject taught at the Agricultural College at Guelph? For a long time to come our principal road mileage must consist of ordinary earth roads (possibly surfaced in some cases with gravel), and their care will in all probability continue to devolve upon farmers. At any rate, the first step to improvement must come from an intelligent, accurately-informed rural opinion, and to this end it is necessary to educate the rising generation to know approximately what can be done, how it should be done, what the work should cost, and how it should be gone about. Otherwise, we run a grave chance to falling victims to incompetence, even though supposed experts were employed. For this reason, there should be at the farmers' college an efficient course of lectures, with demonstrations and object lessons, if possible, for the benefit of the regular students, and a few lectures might very well be given, also, to the short-course men in January. Forestry is being taught at Guelph, and we are pleased to note that a course of lectures in electricity has been put on. Quite as necessary is a practical training in roadmaking. Whether the O. A. C. should undertake to go into the subject exhaustively, with a view to turning out highway engineers, we will not attempt to decide. Possibly the professional end of it may as well be left to the School of Practical Science, though it seems as though there would be a better chance of having a first-class, up-to-date instructor for the agricultural students if the headquarters of the Provincial Good-roads Chair were established at the Agricultural College, and the likeliest material for experts in the science and practice of roadmaking are certainly to be found among the student-body of the Ontario Agricultural College. The only objection, in our opinion, is that the purely agricultural feature of this institution is liable to be weakened by a multiplication of professional opportunities afforded thereat.

The importance of the roads question can hardly be overestimated. Good roads make the farmer's life pleasanter, and his business more profitable. It is all right to endeavor to raise farm products cheaply, but the advantage of cheap production on the farm is shorn of its blessing for the man who can haul only half a load to market, wearing out his vehicle, horses, and temper in so doing, and oftentimes missing a chance to realize good prices on account of impassable roads. Improvements in production and transportation should go hand in hand. Hitherto, rural transportation has been shamefully neglected. The good-roads crusade requires leadership, experiment, systematic instruction and persistent effort. This necessitates its localization at some point, like Guelph, which may then become a fount of inspiration and information, as it already has done in so many phases of advanced agricultural practice.