

A Demoralizing System.

POLITICS AND PATERNALISM—A DISGRACEFUL WASTE—PROTESTS FROM SELF-RESPECTING AMERICANS WHO REFUSE TO BE "BUNCOED."

The *Country Gentleman*, of Albany, N. Y., is not only an ably-conducted periodical from the standpoint of the American farmer, but it possesses a wholesome spirit of independence, and has the courage of its convictions. The following vigorous letter from one of its contributors, Mr. F. H. Valentine, which we reproduce, should be a fresh warning, in addition to some examples we have already seen at home, of the dangers of official paternalism. With this appalling object lesson before us, Canadians should call a halt before being led further into the mire:

I am glad to see that you are again condemning the distribution of free seeds by the Government, through the Department of Agriculture. I say by the Government, because in the earlier days of his administration of Department affairs, Secretary Wilson apparently did his best to abolish or minimize this farcical humbug. But Congress not only disregarded his reasonable recommendations, but in the face of them increased the appropriations! What the Secretary's attitude now is, and whether he has seen fit to experience a change of heart, I know not, but the system—always

HAD IN PRINCIPLE AND WORSE IN PRACTICE—has now descended to apparently impossible lower depths.

As we all know, the original idea was to disseminate new and valuable seeds and plants. How far actual practice has lost sight of this commendable intention, those of us who have received any of these seeds well know. I have for several years past received from the Department and from members of Congress, packages of seeds of varieties which had been, some of them, in successful cultivation by market gardeners in different parts of the country for 40 years. But the varietal names have heretofore always been given on the packets, and one might have a reasonable certainty of at least *thinking* he knew what he was getting. Now not even this is done. A few days since, I went into our post office, where the postmaster was distributing a pile of unaddressed packages of seeds. Each bore the compliments, etc., of our member of Congress, but the latter apparently did not consider the packages of enough importance to address them to his constituents. Wise man! The postmaster distributed them according to his own ideas. As I received one, it was with the advice to

FEED THE SEEDS TO THE CHICKENS

when I got home. As our chickens are pure-bred and of considerable value, I did not run the risk. The package contained four packets of seeds. One was marked: "Peas—A Select Variety"; another, "Beet—A Select Variety"; one, "Watermelon—A Selected Variety"; the fourth, "Spinach—A Selected Variety." Just what the particular distinction is between "Select" and "Selected" I am not aware. Not heeding the good advice received, I have planted them, just to see what they will bring forth. The packets are all small, containing fewer seeds than the average seedsman would put in a 5-cent packet. The peas were some wrinkled variety, many of them weevil-eaten, and numbered about 220 by actual count. They will have to yield extraordinarily well, and every one grow, if the product furnish enough for one meal for even our small family. So much for their value!

In the past, there have been

MANY SCANDALS,

of more or less gravity, in connection with the purchase and distribution of these seeds. Now another has apparently been unearthed. A city newspaper has been investigating the matter as regards conformity on the part of the packers of the seeds to requirements of the Government, and finds, as reported, that instead of coming up to required weight, those sent out fall far below, thus swindling the Government—the people—out of the difference. This sort of thing might have been expected when the contract is let to the lowest bidder, and is to be guarded against only by the strictest supervision.

But now we are threatened with a new deluge. It is currently reported that the Department of Agriculture is to engage in the distribution of trees along the same lines. And why not? If the distribution of seeds was wise and right, that of trees and shrubs should be also. And by that same token, why not send the farmer a plow and harrow to fit his ground, cultivators and hoes to cultivate his crops, mowers and harvesters to gather them in, and if all this, then let our beneficent uncle add a "selected variety" of pig or sheep or goat or cattle or poultry to improve the live stock of the farms. True, these could not be sent through the mails, but when the Government owns the railroads instead of the railroads owning the Government, no doubt provision will be made for their distribution. Imagine a lot of farmers lounging around the railroad some spring day, swapping stories while they wait for the

"GOVERNMENT FREE LIVE-STOCK EXPRESS,"

loaded with a varied assortment of "selected" farm animals for free distribution! It would be much such a scene as we now see when a lot of victims have gathered for the regular spring delivery after some enterprising nursery agent has been "working" the country round. And it would likely prove just about as big a bunco game too.

But what are the gravest objections to these practices? Not their money cost. The entire expense of the free-seed distribution is a mere bagatelle compared with the number of people taxed, or the vast sums squandered in other ways. Not the influence upon the recipients, for nine out of every ten on the average estimate the seeds at their true value, and make slurring remarks about them. Every packet contains a request that results be reported to the Department. It would be interesting to know what proportion of the recipients comply with this request. Neither is it an objection that results are often disappointing. Few people expect much from these seeds, and it would be a blessing to the few who do if they met disappointment. Neither is it the overloading of the mails with tons upon tons of this useless rubbish, thus increasing the deficit that is such a bugbear to the postal officials, and leads them to postpone as long as possible the inevitable general free rural mail delivery. All these are bad enough, but the great objection is in the debauched and degenerated system itself. As now carried out, it is the pettiest and most

CONTEMPTIBLE PATERNALISM AND FAVORITISM.

It is an insult to every independent, self-respecting farmer. Of course, seeds are not sent to farmers only, for any applicant, though he live at the summit of the Rocky Mountains or on top of some colossal city pile, and have not a foot of ground to receive them, may have his quota of seeds. But the prevailing idea is that the system is for the benefit of the farmer, and he must bear the onus. The popular notion is that he can be purchased with a dime's worth of seeds. And this notion has been fostered by the farmers' (mis)representatives, too; for did not Congress persist in continuing and increasing the appropriations for this purpose against the direct protest of the Secretary of Agriculture? Every self-respecting farmer in the land should protest strongly against the continuance of this pernicious system, and continue doing so till he is heard and heeded. Farmers' organizations should throw the full weight of their united power against it. As it now exists, it is

A STANDING DISGRACE

to the American farmer.

I do not advocate abolishing the work of the Department of Agriculture in the discovery, distribution for trial and dissemination of new and valuable or promising varieties of every species of economic plant, tree or shrub. This may well come within its province, and may be made of inestimable benefit primarily to the agricultural classes and eventually to the whole people. But the distribution for testing must be systematized. If done at all by the Government, it should be through the experiment stations. These are now well organized in practically every State, and their officials are better informed as to localities and individuals within their territory for the intelligent and efficient accomplishment of this work than any outsider can possibly hope to be. All our reliable seedsmen, too, now maintain extensive trial grounds, and are ever on the alert to discover and bring out new varieties. These agencies have developed to a wonderful degree since the scheme of sending out free seeds was first inaugurated by the Government. There is not the apparent need there once was for the work of the latter, though there is still much that can be done, if only—and there's the rub—there was less politics in the business, and more plain business sense in methods adopted. I do not wish to be understood as casting any reflections upon the incumbent of the office of Secretary of Agriculture, whoever he may be: for he is but the victim of

A VICIOUS SYSTEM

which he did not create, and can only partially regulate, for it is beyond his control.

Another reprehensible practice of our beneficent Government, in which the Department of Agriculture is perhaps the most flagrant offender, is the publication of such vast numbers of bulletins, reports, articles, etc., on every conceivable subject that by any possibility can be construed as coming within its province. To such an extent is this carried that a monthly bulletin is published, giving the names of the different publications during the month, together with their price; for many of them are sold for five cents and upward. Then a monthly paper is issued, called the *Crop Reporter*; but while some of the information it contains may be valuable, most of it is so ancient that it is useless. Of course, the initiated know that the Government printing office, through which all these are issued, is only a part of the great political machine maintained as a haven of rest for partisans; but the practice of issuing many of these publications is a serious reflection upon the ability and sagacity of the agricultural press of the country. What earthly excuse is there for the Government usurping the work of the latter? But, then, no self-respecting paper would give space to some of the subjects treated in these Government prints.

MORE BUNGLING.

One personal experience shows the lax business methods prevailing in connection with this work. It has been my lot to change my post office twice within little more than a year. I had received many of the publications of the Department of Agriculture for many years. At each change, I requested the Department to change my address on its mailing list. It was done to the extent that I received the publications at the new office, but they

continued to come to the old; so that, the last I knew about it, they were coming to three different post offices. How long would a private business continue under such methods? But these are political business methods, and are only samples. The question that should come to every thinking, self-respecting farmer, is: What is my duty with relation to all these flagrant abuses?

Bergen County, N. J.

F. H. VALENTINE.

Summer Care of the Root and Corn Field.

In order to attain the greatest measure of success in raising roots, the preparation should begin the previous fall. As soon as possible after harvest the stubble should be skim-plowed and then harrowed, and two or three weeks after, cultivate and harrow again, and some time in October haul out about sixteen loads of manure per acre and plow down. If all this has been done, it is only necessary in the spring to cultivate with the spring tooth cultivator, then harrow and cultivate again the cross way of the first cultivation, and the ground will be ready to drill up for mangels, sugar beets, and carrots. We find it best to drill up in the morning and sow in the afternoon, and then, a day or two after, go over the drills with the land roller. After we get the mangels, etc., sown, we at once proceed to get our corn, potato and turnip ground ready. The ground that we could not manure last fall has been mostly manured during winter, hauling out and spreading from the sleigh or wagon. When the weather is dry we find it better to harrow every two days what we have plowed, and then when finished harrow across; and if the weather is dry roll before marking. We mark off three feet each way, and plant, from the 20th to 26th of May, with a corn planter, from four to six kernels in each hill. We save the best ears when husking in the fall and braid and hang up in the woodshed. Boughten seed is often a little disappointing. We plant the potatoes, three to four sets in each hill, same as corn, making holes and covering with the hoe; and after corn and potatoes have been planted a few days, and just before they come through the ground, we go over the whole with the common harrow, and sometimes go over twice, but in this we have to use judgment and be guided by the weather and state of the ground. The harrowing kills the small weeds which have sprouted, and breaks the crust so that the young shoots can spring up much easier, and it saves a great amount of hoeing.

It will now be time to cultivate the mangels, carrots, and beets, and after this has been done we generally take the flat hoes and pare off the sides of the drill as close as possible to the young plants. This gives them a chance to grow larger before thinning out, and stops the weeds from stealing the food that the plants ought to have.

Now the ground intended for turnips, which was plowed and harrowed along with the corn ground, will require to be cultivated with the spring-tooth cultivator and harrowed in a few days, and, perhaps, have these operations repeated before sowing, which should be done in our latitude from the 10th to 17th of June. Before drilling, we sow broadcast a mixture of salt and ashes. If the seed is good, about 1½ pounds per acre is sufficient, and a day or two after sowing roll with the heavy roller.

The corn and potatoes should be cultivated about once a week, and after rain, until the corn gets so tall that it breaks it down to go amongst it with a horse. We cultivate deep at first and as shallow as possible the last times. We intend going through our roots this year with a subsoil plow. We have been thinning our mangels and beets with the turnip hoe, same as turnips, the last few years, and have done it much quicker than by the old method of hand thinning. When the roots are carefully thinned out there is not so much to do again, but we always try to go through again, taking out any small ones where more than one plant is left, and cutting off any weeds that may have cropped up since the thinning-out process. We have discontinued the old process of hilling-up and use altogether flat cultivation. Some time in July we drill up the headlands and sow Greystone turnips, which keep the ground clean and make a nice change for the cows in the fall. We go through the corn and potatoes with the hoe to cut out any thistles or other weeds that the cultivator may have missed, and any corn that may be too thick; but, generally, with us there is very little to do with the hoe. We put Paris green on the potatoes with water, having attained most success by that method. We plant pumpkins with the corn.

D. LAWRENCE.

Oxford Co., Ont.

Farmers' Institute Excursions to the Ontario Agricultural College, June, 1901.

Saturday, June 15th—W. Huron (G. T. R.), Halton (G. T. R. and C. P. R.).
Monday, June 17th—Peel Tp. and Drayton Agr. Society (or W. Wellington).
Tuesday, June 18th—S. Ontario and S. Simcoe.
Wednesday, June 19th—S. Oxford and Haldimand (G. T. R.), N. Oxford (C. P. R.).
Thursday, June 20th—E. and W. Lambton and E. Huron.
Friday, June 21st—N. and W. Bruce (G. T. R.), Dufferin (C. P. R.).
Saturday, June 22nd—N. and S. Norfolk.
Monday, June 24th—N. Ontario and Peel Co.
Tuesday, June 25th—South Perth.
Wednesday, June 26th—S. Grey and Parry Sound.
Thursday, June 27th—South Bruce.
Friday, June 28—W. Simcoe.