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EDITORIAL.

What note is sweeter than the robin's ?

April is an interesting month in the barn.

This is the time of year when many a shop and office man wishes he were a farmer.

Whether spring seeding arrives early or late matters but little, as a rule, so long as one is ready for it when it comes.

To lose the roof of a barn is bad enough, and it does not minimize the loss to have the contents afterwards soaked with rain.

Lanes and roadways can be very economically and satisfactorily graded during April with a plow and a split-log drag. The sloppier the mud the better, so long as it does not run or the horses mire.

Good thrifty stock, economically handled, is a profit-maker on any farm, even where the profit consists only in the manure produced. But pity the man with ill-doing scrubs. He works for small wages and low interest.

The Easter-tide season of storm and rain comes in time to emphasize the recent advice of "The Farmer's Advocate" to plant trees. Well-placed bluffs of trees protect buildings noticeably, but where a barn stands up exposed to an uninterrupted three-mile sweep of wind, look out!

Given a rich farm, maintained in fertile condition by a liberal supply of barnyard manure, it is easy to produce hay, corn silage and other crops at considerably less than current market values. The turning of a second profit through conversion of these into milk or meat, demands that only stock of the very best quality be kept.

Popular impressions are often erroneous. Prof. Wm. H. Day says April is the month of least precipitation. The belief that it is the wettest is due mainly to the accumulated saturation which has to be evaporated before the land may be dried out and warmed up to seed-bed conditions.

We fear the peach crop will be a failure this year. In a recent visit to the Niagara Peninsula, we heard not a single prediction of disaster. That is ominous. A big crop of early prophecies of failure generally precedes a normal harvest of the luscious fruit, but when the crop seems wholly promising in April it raises fears that the worst is yet to come.

A thousand dollars a year in the city will not secure as good a living as many farmers' families enjoy, nor will the social position be so desirable. Two hundred dollars a year rents but a small and modest city house. Fuel, bread, milk, butter, eggs, pork, beef and car fare run away with another good round sum which the farm supplies in whole or in part. Comparison of cash incomes is deceiving. Comparison of total incomes, or better still, of annual savings, makes the showing much more favorable to the farm.

The Cow Question.

"How many cows does he keep ?" is usually the first question asked when enquiring as to the extent of a man's dairy business. "How much milk does he produce ?" or "How much do his monthly checks come to ?" would be more to the purpose.

There were herds of forty cows supplying milk for cheese factories in this country last summer earning no larger checks for their owners than other herds of ten cows supplying the same factories. The difference was due to breed, selection, feed, milking and general management. The cost of feed, stabling and care was undoubtedly somewhat higher per cow in the case of the good, than of the poor herd, but the cost per dollar's worth of milk would be nowhere near as great.

Think of the farmer and his wife and children and hired man toiling all summer, first of all to produce and store the feed, and then twice a day to fill the mangers, clean the stables and pull the teats of forty cows for a total annual income of ten hundred dollars, plus what may have been made out of the hogs, but minus interest on a farm, horses, implements and $2,000 worth of cows, to say nothing of incidental running expenses ! Or, more probably the owner was keeping only about twenty such cows on a hundred acres of land, and would therefore have but five or six hundred dollars, plus a little hog money, to pay for all the labor, interest and expense. The only chance such a business would have of holding boys and girls on the farm would be by keeping them too poor and spiritless to get off.

Hundreds of farmers in this country are doing little better or no better than that, and thousands more are exceeding it by a narrow margin. Other thousands are away in advance, feeding twenty-five or thirty first-class cows on a hundred acres and realizing returns from cheese or butter and hogs, over and above feed purchased, of two thousand dollars a year and upwards. Many thousands more, adopting a plan which for the average man is wiser than extensive dairying, milk eight to twelve good cows and devote the balance of their feed to the raising of colts, calves, sheep, hogs and poultry, and perhaps sell some seed grain, clover seed, beans, potatoes, vegetables or fruit, thus making, in the long run, nearly as much as the farmer with the twenty good cows and a great deal more than he with the twenty poor ones, and this too without the disadvantage of having himself and family continually tied to the cows' tails.

In its stern practical reality this cow question is mightily important. The great point is not how many cows you keep, but how good they are, how well you feed and care for them, and how much you make out of them per cow, or per acre of land required to produce their feed. It takes fifteen to twenty minutes a day to milk a cow and nearly the same for a poor one as for a good one. That means a hundred hours a year, worth twelve to fifteen dollars. Feeding, watering, cleaning stables and general care will require one hundred hours more, bringing the total charge for attendance up to, say, $25. Other charges are interest $3.60, depreciation, $2, housing $3 to $5, various minor expenses, and finally feed, varying from thirty to fifty dollars, bringing the total cost of keeping a cow up to a minimum of $63.60, or a maximum of $85.60. In return you have cheese or cream checks, skim milk, the value of a week-old calf and the manure. Combining these items, are your cows earning you $85.60 apiece ? Are they earning you $63.60 ? Are they earning you what they cost to keep them ? If not what is wrong—cows, feed or dairyman ? Probably all three. First of all the cows. Are they in the thirty or sixty-pound class ; the three-thousand or the ten thousand ? Are they the kind of cows that can be fed up to a decent profitable production ? Do you know for sure whether they are or not ? Why not get some light on that question ? The weigh scales, the milk record and the Babcock test for butter-fat shed broad rays on the subject, and the records, if studied, start trains of thought that lead to progress on the cow question. J. A. Ruddick, Dairy and Cold Storage Commissioner, Ottawa, who gladly supplies blanks on application, tells us the cow-testing movement is growing so fast now they can hardly keep up with it, and besides members of organized cow-testing associations, many dairymen are testing their cows individually. The man who tells you to keep more cows is not always your friend. The one who induces you to keep none but good cows, of whatever breed or class they may be, is your best friend and the best friend to the dairy industry. Write Mr. Ruddick to-day.

The Feed Question.

Along with the cow question goes the other important one of feed. Some one has wisely said : "Feed will tell with the breed but breed will not tell without the feed." Milk is not made wholly out of water, although water is the largest constituent. There must be nutriment and plenty of it, approximately balanced in composition according to the chemist's standards and suited also to the cow's appetite, digestive system and individuality. Do no radical culling in your herd till you have first, in the light of the milk-scale records, given each cow a fair chance by having her freshen in strong condition and then feeding her judiciously up to her capacity to respond. Except when working for high records, pasture alone will do well enough in June, but in winter, cows that are expected to give full paying yields must have some meal, even though the roughage consists of good silage, alfalfa hay and roots. This is particularly true of cows which have recently freshened, or which it is desired to develop to a free flow. One pound of meal to each three or four pounds of milk is a good rule, the variation depending upon the quality of the roughage and the nature of the meal. Of course, a discriminating herdsman will follow no rule rigidly, but will rely upon his judgment to adapt it wisely. But following an approximate ratio of feed to milk is a good way to test out the capacity of a cow, while keeping her cost of production within economical bounds.

Supposing one hasn't the meal, will it pay to buy some ? The old-fashioned idea was that what you bought cost money, but what you grew cost nothing, so that milk or meat made with home-grown feeds was all profit. That idea came down to us from pioneer days, when cash was scarce, and labor alone was plentiful, and only a few products had any market value. Under such circumstances the conversion of un-