# THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE
## AND HOME MAGAZINE.

THE LEADING AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL IN THE DOMINION.

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It is impartial and independent of all cliques or parties, handsomely illustrated with original engravings, and furnishes the most practical, reliable and profitable information for farmers, dairymen, gardeners, stockmen and home-makers, of any publication in Canada.
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farm was a foot-lift, two-furrow riding plow, designed especially for Eastern conditions. It was tried first on a sod field that was to be plowed for oats. Not having been set up quite right at first by the implement agent, and being tried on very soft ground with four rather snappy young mares that had never been worked four abreast, this plow at first was rather disappointing in its work. The evener provided was designed to place the off horse in the furrow. This crowded them all together. The horses floundered somewhat in the soft ground, and the first few furrows resembled a snake's trail. The land being soft, it was deemed best not to push the plowing of this field, especially as one team was needed some days at other work, and only two half-days' work was done on it with the big plow. Passers-by may have inferred that the plow was not a success on sod land. It was far from our purpose, however, to give up because results were not thoroughly satisfactory at first. The evener was changed, putting the off horse on the plowed ground, and the plow started in on a 16-acre sod field to be turned over for corn. Some minor adjustments were made, and both bottoms soon got to working smoothly. Something better than three acres was averaged here in a day amounting to not much over nine hours in the field. The land was dry and the sod tough, having been unbroken for sixteen years. It was plowed to a depth of five inches or better, and except where ant hills or other irregularities in the surface prevented, was turned over quite nicely, and worked up very well. The teamster, who had never driven a two-furrow plow before, soon became quite expert in its operation, and could even finish with it where the lands came out right, though this was not done as a rule, mainly for the reason that the big plow left too wide a furrow. So far as could be judged from the occasional opportunities for comparison, four horses on this plow would turn over an acre with rather less expenditure of energy than when hooked to a couple of riding plows. They seemed to work as comfortably, notwithstanding that some of the shoulders had been chafed by the careless handling of a former employee, seemed none the worse of being worked four abreast on this implement. In some sweltering days towards the last, lumps were raised under the left tugs of the two horses on the land side, due to repeated turning gee-about with short whiffletrees. These were afterwards reduced by relieving the pressure with a thick felt under the back pad, washing with creolin and applying oxide of zinc ointment. We are of the opinion that longer whiffletrees would be an advantage, and they could easily be provided when the horses are worked as we drove them. We very much prefer having the off horse on the plowed ground, so that the teams may be spread out more, thus keeping cooler, and also turning more safely and conveniently, while avoiding any semblance of side-draft. We believe, further, that it would be wise to give the off horse a little advantage to compensate for spongy footing, though in this connection, it should be remembered that his footing is as good as if rolling or disking on a freshly-plowed field. Probably for fall plowing, it might be better not to have the ground tramped; but, for spring work, we would not think of putting up with the slight side draft which it is difficult to avoid when the off horse follows the furrow. On the whole, we can frankly express ourselves as well pleased with the two-furrow plow, and would strongly advise every farmer who keeps three or more horses to invest in one and save a man's time. Do not be discouraged if the first trial seems rather disappointing. Study the adjustment of the plow, as all mechanism should be studied. Drive straight, watch the little points, and you will soon find yourself doing a class of work which in most essential respects it would require an expert walking plowman to excel.

## Theory and Practice.

Many practical, successful farmers have but a poor opinion of anyone who farms by theory. Their thought of such was voiced unmistakably to a "Farmer's Advocate" representative last summer by a farmer whom he met in the course of a circuit through an Ontario county. Said he: "We had a neighbor who ran his farm according to 'The Farmer's Advocate.' Yes, sir, strictly according to what 'The Farmer's Advocate' said. He had to have the latest thing in implements, and in the live-stock line scrubs had to be weeded out, and nothing but pure-breds kept. For instance, he paid $80 for a couple of lambs from the flock of a noted sheep-breeder, and"—said our informant, with considerable glee—"he never realized $10 in returns from their progeny. Everything he did was done in similar style; he farmed right by the book, with the result that in a few years his farm, which had been clear of incumbrance, was mortgaged heavily. Luckily for his family he died when he did. Had he lived two or three years longer, the whole farm would have been lost. When the father died, his two boys went to work. Yes," said our informant, delighted at the chance to rub it in to one of the staff, "they changed around and went to work. And in twelve years they not only had the mortgage on the home place paid off, but they had bought another farm, and had it almost paid for, too."

Our readers will readily perceive that little defence was needed on the part of "The Farmer's Advocate" man. This journal, while recommending the use of good stock, has never advised slipshod methods in business, nor the swallowing of advice wholesale. The most of its articles but record the experiences of practical, hard-headed men who have made a success of their work.

But on this question of theoretical versus practical farming, there is room for something to be said. Theory may be mere hypothesis or speculation; or again, and more strictly, it may mean a plan or scheme subsisting in the mind, but based on principles verifiable by experiment or observation. Sound theory and good practice always agree. Let us not make the mistake of thinking that theory is usually wrong and practice always right. Much of what is called practical farming is but unthinking following in the tracks of our forefathers or neighbors, and, carried on under changed conditions, is mistaken and unprofitable. Those farmers of a few generations ago who gave a new start to agriculture by their success in the business, and in whose steps we think it wise to walk, were they living now, would not be following in their own tracks, but striking out in new lines, and we and the rest would be calling them cranks and theorists.. What is needed in order to profit by any advice that may be given, whether theoretical or practical, is the use of good judgment. The judgment should be brought to bear on every question that comes up. Nothing should be bolted whole. Questions occasionally arise where it is wise to disregard the conclusions of both the practical man and the theorist. "Wheat after wheat" is neither according to good practice nor sound theory. Yet, in exceptional cases it has proved to be the wisest possible course. "Never mud the seed in" is a safe rule to follow, usually. But in the spring of 1909, in Western Ontario, those who had the most seed sown before a heavy snow storm which fell April 28th and 29th, had the least "mudding" to do, and reaped the best crops. In that season, it would have been prudent to begin before the ground was ready.

Generally, however, the judgment will approve of what the best authorities advise, and it is always well, in respect of any radically new departure, to preserve an open mind. Without committing oneself to a new scheme, a trial in a small way can often be made quietly, and the future course governed by the results. It will not do to plant oneself squarely against anything merely because it is new.

But further, the opinions of a mere theorist—that is, one who has not tried out his idea—should never be taken without reserve. There is scarcely any man so clever as to know all about a given process or plan until he has tried it himself. He may be sure that he is right in every particular, but, on trial, unthought of difficulties arise, some of which he may find it impossible to overcome, and the whole grand scheme prove a fizzle.

Another advantage which the practical man has over his theoretical competitor is that, in testing out any proposed change, he has the benefit of a knowledge acquired by long observation, which it is almost impossible to impart to another. He knows at a glance when the land is in good condition for working, while the other may follow directions and squeeze some of it in his hand and scrape it with his foot, and yet not be sure. A skilled stockman will almost unconsciously note, in passing an animal, the look of the hair, the brightness of the eye, the condition of the droppings, and judge accurately as to its health and thrift. The unobservant or unskilled man may have a serious case of sickness on his hands before he notices anything wrong. Knowledge, however acquired, is power, and this power the practical man has. But let him not despise the young enthusiast whose ignorance seems to him amusing. He may make many mistakes, his theories may not all work out well, but he also can learn, and sometimes leaves his more staid neighbor far in the rear. One of the best judges of stock in Middlesex County, when he bought his first flock of sheep, was so green that his neighbors fooled him into believing that he had been cheated because the sheep had no front upper teeth. When he learned that they were laughing at his ignorance and expecting his failure, he set his own teeth hard, and determined that he would yet beat them at the game of handling stock; and he did.

No, the theorist should never be despised. Not even he whose theories seem mere hypotheses. What great advance has ever been made that did not at the time seem ridiculous and absurd to those who prided themselves on being practical? What would the world be, where would agriculture have been, without those who see visions and dream dreams? The vast majority of the many schemes propounded by their enthusiastic originators come to nothing, but what of that? Of the millions of blossoms with which the fruit trees were so lately adorned, not one in a score, possibly not one in a hundred, will develop into fruit. But we do not, therefore, think of the blossoms as useless. We know that without bloom there would be no fruit. And without theories there would be little advance in farm methods.