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Editorial.

The Dairy Situation.

To say that the present situation of the dairy industry in Western Canada is in a bad way only faintly expresses the condition of things. Production is declining, yet consumption is increasing, or should be, as the population increases. We get many complaints from producers that a fair price cannot be got for their make, and yet consumers pay twenty-five cents a pound and up in the city of Winnipeg right along, and sometimes a premium of five or ten cents a pound over the first mentioned figure.

In the first place, dairying is no match under present conditions for its competitor, wheat-raising, and no campaign of education along dairy lines can persuade farmers that it pays them to produce cream which, when marketed, will represent a return of fifteen cents a pound for butter, or less, when they can grow crops of wheat yielding twenty bushels per acre, which sell for seventy-five cents a bushel.

To the rank and file, the declining fertility of their farms has not yet been sufficiently demonstrated, and the likelihood is that at the first inkling of such they would hie themselves to the new lands further off, and realize on their old farms, which have risen in value from the real-estate man's view, although LESSENERED IN VALUE as storehouses of crop-producing energy.

The West has been through the vain attempt to plant creameries and cheese factories in unsuitable surroundings, proof of which is supplied by the many silent creameries and buildings through the country, sad monuments to the attempt to graft such scions as dairy schools, creameries and cheese factories on the country before a root-stalk or trunk in the shape of a dairy-fitted people existed. The fact is, the dairy industry in the West started to run before it could walk, and it fell down. Will it get on its feet again? Yes, but progress will be more gradual, and, therefore, more permanent, as the impoverishment of the land is appreciated, and as pork production increases, because dairying and hog-raising are indispensable to each other.

There are, however, some things to be overcome or instituted before the industry can even move forward, in place of backwards, and those things are the lessening of the charges on butter during its handling from producer to consumer; the grading of dairy butter, and the abolition of the trading system by the country merchants; the selection of heavier and more persistent milkers, and the feeding of beef of the cow boarders; the use of the travelling dairy for educational purposes, and the growing and curing of suitable fodders, to which might be added the preaching of the gospel of the silo, and the introduction of effective milking machines (we understand there are two about perfected, and soon to be placed on the market), and the understanding by cream-sellers of the Babcock test.

One of the present features of the butter production seems to be that, in many localities, the good buttermakers have abandoned the churn and worker, and that the people who make inferior butter are still spoiling good cream by turning it into poor butter.

For the present, and for many years hence, the bulk of the milk-producing cattle of the country will be those of the type that produce a calf which, when matured, will make good beef, and at the same time produce a fair quantity of milk; and, in the more thickly-settled districts and on farms where large families exist some dairying will be done, and will, we believe, prove remunerative, but only a person of visionary ideas can be

possessed of the idea that the wheat districts can remain such and be noted for turning out dairy products. For a grain-producing territory, there is to-day a lot of money invested in the leading dairy implement, the cream separator, yet it will be found demonstrated, time and again, that the farmer is not to be tied to dairying because of an expenditure of a few dollars on a separator, and he will with qualms relegate that useful implement to the junk pile or scrap heap, as he has in former times other tools of his profession.

An unlettered man may be a wheat-raiser, but dairying, to be at all successful, calls for art and scientific practice at the hands of educated men, and it is a question if our agriculture is on the whole properly prepared to embrace dairying. The situation is an unpleasant one to those who esteem the bouquet of good dairy butter more highly than the perfumes of the Orient or the spices of Araby, but for the comfort of those whose palates are as yet uneducated to good butter, we may say the wholesale conversion of the Ontario tub dairy product into Manitoba creamery bricks goes steadily on.

The Mission of the Experimental Farms.

As is well known in the Canadian West, there are three branch experimental farms of the Dominion Department of Agriculture, located at Brandon, Man.; Indian Head, Assa., and Agassiz, B. C.

The mission of these farms is, speaking generally, TO PROVE THINGS, and thus save the farmers of their constituencies (Manitoba, the Northwest Territories and British Columbia) loss of time and money in experimentation. In addition, the mission of these farms is largely educational, bringing to the attention of farmers better methods of farming, new varieties of grain, roots and fodder plants suited to the country, to demonstrate the most profitable and rational methods of stock-raising, to arouse interest in gardening and fruit-raising, and to stimulate tree-planting for shelter, fuel and home adornment.

Such a mission is no small one, and is in charge of Director Saunders, at Ottawa, and the three superintendents, Messrs. Bedford (Brandon), Mackay (Indian Head), Sharpe (Agassiz), and their staffs of assistants to do the actual farm work. Each farm costs approximately each year all the way from ten to fourteen thousand dollars, too small a sum when one comprehends the work to be done and the territory allotted to each.

The greatest attention has been paid to tree-planting, originating new varieties of wheat to meet the climatic conditions, experimenting with Russian apples and with grasses, in which avenues of work considerable has been done, and much worthy of commendation.

In spite of the great increase in correspondence, etc., which has accrued to these farms, no adequate provision seems to have been made for assistance to the superintendents, for the work is such now as to prevent them getting out among the farmers as much as formerly. They have been for years the outstanding and unfailling attractions as lecturers at Farmers' Institutes, winning their way into the farmers' confidence by their practical matter-of-fact way of presenting the results of their work to the farmers, and in no case have we ever heard the accusation that these superintendents pretended to know it all, yet these men do not seem to have opportunities to get out and see what other experiment stations are doing, and, as a consequence, have not the same chance to strengthen themselves as experimenters, as many of the officials at U. S. stations have. Leaders, or men intended to be leaders in educa-

tional work, must have opportunities to get out and exchange ideas, and should be given a free hand to work out experiments they think would be beneficial, and should have liberty to cut out experiments of little value. The same holds good with our experimental farms. The work done in testing methods of summer-fallowing, the distribution of samples of grains, roots, fruits and ornamental trees has left its impress on Western agriculture, and many a prairie farm has to-day its patch of small fruits, its wind-breaks, its meadow of rye or brome grass, as a result of educational currents which flowed from the experimental farms in Western Canada. In B. C., agriculture has benefited to as marked a degree in some of its special lines.

Unfortunately, the duties of the director prevent more than flying annual or semi-annual trip to these farms, and, as a consequence, he is debarred the opportunity of coming into touch with the farmers and their needs, and is thus unable to accurately feel the pulse of Western agriculture; hence, it is not fair to expect that he can be as closely in touch with the farmers' needs as he would like to be, or that alone, he can say what experiments or work should be instituted to best suit the needs of the country.

The best evidence that the work being done is not as fully in accord with Western agriculture and its needs as we should like to see, is furnished by the annual reports, that contain mention of things that should not be there, and omit mention in those pages many experiments that should be conducted.

The agriculture of the West is, partly as the result of nature's inexorable laws, progressing and, therefore, changing, a fact not evidenced by the reports of the farms to as great a degree as that progress warrants, and while the farms are well worth visiting, and the reports worthy of study, neither are as profitable to the farmers as they might be made.

The director is noted for his careful administration of the public funds at his disposal, which, by the way, are far too small, and for the thoroughness of the work he undertakes.

The time is ripe, however, for work more in accord with the needs of Western agriculture to be instituted, so that the farms may continue to be object lessons of advanced agriculture, which they will soon cease to be, unless new and needed experiments are started.

In a subsequent issue, we shall endeavor to outline some work that might be taken up, work that would amply warrant any expenditures made.

Suggestions from a Subscriber.

Having been a subscriber to your publication for some 6 months, I would like to make a few remarks. Anyone who thoughtfully reads the articles printed from time to time, cannot but recognize the sincere motive which its management seem to keep in view. The improvement of everything pertaining to better farming, no matter what branch we see fit to follow, always receives marked attention by the "Farmer's Advocate." We believe this is its main feature; but the moral and social matter is also of a character with which the most fastidious could find no fault. If there is one feature in its columns that I prefer more than another, it is the letters sent in by farmers themselves on any seasonable topic. The reports of the Grain-growers' Association, agricultural societies, etc., always interest me. Our interests are, or should be, mutual, and the more we understand each other by the enlightenment of such correspondence, the better position we are in to make a co-operative move in the right direction. I would like to see more farmers take advantage of your liberal offer of publishing worthy material on any farm subject, as we can all learn many things yet. Reading written matter seems to leave a deeper impression than listening to a speaker. We have more time to look at points in different aspects, and reference can be turned to at our leisure. Lest I intrude on your space, I will close for this time. Wishing the management a happy and prosperous New Year.

Cartwright, Man. GEO. ARMSTRONG.