

### An Editor's Idea of Fairness.

On the 7th of February we read a paper on "Robbing the Land," before the Dairy Association of the County of Huntingdon, P. Q. The following criticism appeared in the *Farmer's Advocate* for April, headed, "Our Government and its Confederates Preach False Doctrines in the Methods of Restoring the Fertility of the Soil":

To the Editor of the *Advocate*:

SIR,—Prof. Robertson, of the Model Farm, Guelph, and Mr. Shaw, of Hamilton, have recently been down east, attending "Farmers' Conventions" and lecturing, the former on the "Model Dairy Cow," and the latter on "Robbing the Land." Among the places visited was Huntingdon, P. Q., and I have been reading the report of the meeting there as given in the *Gleaner*, published in that town. As both of these gentlemen at that meeting, and most likely at others also, expressed and reiterated opinions which are erroneous and misleading, I request the use of a small space in your widely circulated journal to point out to farmers (and the lecturers) where they are in error.

Mr. S., in his paper, makes some very good points. He says: "A man who crops continually and puts back nothing will leave his children a farm on which they cannot make a living. No soil is so rich that it cannot be exhausted," etc. But when he goes on to say that an *exhausted farm* can be restored to fertility from its own resources while selling off beef, he is grievously in error. Yet, in answer to a question, he repeats it thus: "I deny that a farmer cannot sell off a certain quantity of produce without impoverishing his soil. The fertility can even be increased while doing so." He had doubled the fertility of his farm in eight years, all the while exporting beef. Does any one really believe that a farmer can take the hay, grain, roots or whatever it may be that he grows, feed that to cattle, sell off the beef, putting back only the manure, and by so doing *increase* the fertility of the farm? The thing is absurd. It is true that cattle raising or dairy farming will not run down a farm as quickly as grain growing, but the exhaustion will come just as surely, if not so rapidly. He confutes himself, however, because he says: "A day is coming for artificial manures, but there is no use buying them while we are wasting the manure we have." Now, why mention artificial manures at all, if farmers can *double* the fertility of their farms in eight years, at the same time exporting beef (and making money at it, I suppose), as he says he did.

He also says: "Artificial manures ought not to be used unless the farmer knows what his land lacks and how to apply them. Ashes are better than phosphates or guano." The first part of this piece of advice is like that of the fond mother who advised her boy not to go into the water till he learned to swim, and he might as well say that salt is better than sugar, as say "ashes are better than phosphates or guano." How is a farmer to find out what his land needs unless by trying different things? If land needs ammonia, 1000 bushels of ashes per acre would not supply a particle of it, but a small quantity of guano would.

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To this somewhat singular production we sent a reply, accompanied by the following letter:

Hamilton, April 15th, 1887.

W. WELD ESQ.,

Ed. and prop. *Farmer's Advocate*, London, Ont.

DEAR SIR,—In your issue of April (p. 105), I am criticised as I think unfairly and untruthfully, and as my name and address are distinctly designated you will please allow me to put myself right in the columns of the *Advocate*. To that end I have prepared a short reply which you will find enclosed. I have purposely refrained from making long quotations from the attack of "Subscriber" lest I should trespass on your space.

Truly yours,

THOS. SHAW.

The reply read thus:

AN UNFAIR ACCUSATION, AND UNTRUE.

ED. *Farmer's Advocate*.

DEAR SIR,—In your April number, p. 105, is an article headed "Our Government and its Confederates Preach False Doctrines in the Methods of Re-

storing the Fertility of the Soil," and signed by "Subscriber." I believe, sir, you will have the fairness to allow me to reply, as I am distinctly designated, and to insert the same in your May issue; and well knowing the value of space in an agricultural monthly, I will promise to be brief.

It is unjust and untrue for "Subscriber" to charge me with being a "confederate" of the Government. It is true that I read a paper on "Robbing the Land" at the Dairy Convention of the county of Huntingdon, P. Q., on Feb. 7th, 1887, going down there all the way expressly for that purpose; but I did so solely on the invitation of the secretary of the Association. Not a line passed on the subject between the Government of Ontario and myself, or any of the officials thereof, in reference to the reading of this paper or of any of the other papers that I read at the Farmers' Institutes. In every instance I went at the invitation of the secretary or president. It is therefore unfair and untrue to charge me with being a "confederate" of the Government, although if it were so I would not be ashamed of the connection.

I am next charged with "Preaching False Doctrines in the Methods of Restoring the Fertility of the Soil." I did say that the fertility of land can be maintained while selling off from it beef only or dairy products, without any additional enrichment other than it will itself provide, if judiciously managed, and so I still believe. I did say that in this way I had doubled the producing power of my own farm in eight years, and can furnish the evidence if necessary. I did not say that the fertility of "exhausted" farms can be restored in this way, but I believe it can, only it will require a longer time. I am willing to argue this point, Mr. Editor, with "Subscriber," or yourself, or any other living man, in the columns of your paper, or on any platform that may be named within a reasonable distance.

I did say, as "Subscriber" represents, that the day for the use of "artificial manures" is coming, and that it was unwise to buy these while we were allowing our present sources of enrichment to waste, and I have met with nothing since that in any way alters this opinion. All men will not grow beef or dairy products, and when those who do not have first husbanded their *home resources* of manurial enrichment, it is far better that they should buy artificial manures to supply the lack caused by the selling of the grain.

I did not say that "ashes are better" (intrinsically) "than phosphates or guano," as "Subscriber" states. I said that ashes allowed to waste on the farm would give a better return for the timely application than purchased phosphates or guanos. And so I say now.

My paper on this subject I read by request at the annual meeting of the Ontario Creamery Association. This association also requested of me leave to publish it in their annual report, so that if "Subscriber" will exercise a little patience he will know exactly what I said; and, if then, he or any other man wishes to criticize it, I am ready.

Truly yours,

THOMAS SHAW.

This letter appeared in the *Advocate* for May, p. 12, but with one of the most vital sentences left out, as will be seen from our second letter below; a sentence which has a qualifying influence on the whole letter. The editor of the *Advocate* added a foot note, which reads:

Our correspondent, "Subscriber," did not call you a "confederate" of the government; no such word was used in his letter. The heading of the letter contained the indictment, which he did not write. We take the responsibility of this charge, and shall defend ourselves if necessary. We will give you limited space to defend your theories, and we sincerely hope you will succeed, for nothing can give greater satisfaction and profit to our readers than the knowledge of a system of husbandry by which they can maintain and increase the fertility of their soil by returns from its own sources. We welcome short and pointed arguments from all quarters, "Subscriber" included, but woe to him who handles the question in such a manner as to attempt to bamboozle our readers; we shall reserve our most caustic pen for him.

A second reply was sent on the 16th May, as below, but which never appeared:

AN UNFAIR ACCUSATION AND UNTRUE.

EDITOR *Farmer's Advocate*,

DEAR SIR,—I was not a little surprised to read in your comments on my letter in the May number of the

*Advocate*, headed "An Unfair Accusation and Untrue," the following statement: "Our correspondent, 'Subscriber,' did not call you a 'confederate' of the government; no such word was used in his letter. The heading of the letter contained the indictment, which he did not write. We take the responsibility of this charge, and shall defend ourselves if necessary."

This most singular statement gives a different complexion to the whole affair. We naturally imagined that we were crossing swords with "Subscriber," but by your own acknowledgment you are responsible for the heading of "Subscriber's" letter, and it is just this heading that contains the essence of the charges of which we complain as "being unfair and untrue." You herein charge us (1) with being a confederate of the government and (2) with preaching false doctrines in the methods of the restoring fertility of the soil," which virtually shifts our contest from "Subscriber" to yourself.

Now, Mr. Editor, I do not know exactly what is in your mind when you use the term "confederate of the government," but you evidently apply it in the sense of a stigma, clearly shown by the tenor of the article which it heads, and by your linking it with the term "indictment." The term "confederate" may mean (a) an ally, (b) united in a common cause, or (c) formed in alliance. Now, it is impossible that such can be the relation which any one holds to the government by undesigned coincidence, for one cannot be an ally, unite in a common cause, or form an alliance, without having previously made certain stipulations to that effect. There cannot be an alliance without *terms* of the same having first existed.

I most emphatically deny that I have ever even tried to treat with the government as an ally, or attempted to form any alliance with them. I never held an office under the government, save that of overseer of highways along side my own farm, nor have I received one cent from the government by way of consideration for anything that I have ever done. I call upon you, Mr. Editor, not to "defend yourself," as you strangely put it, but to substantiate the charges which you bring against me, which I hold as unjust and untrue—it is the part of the accuser to make good his accusation—that I have been or am a confederate of the government of Ontario, in any other sense than in the main being in sympathy with it.

We will reserve the defence of "our theories," to which you refer, to another issue, as your space was so taxed last issue that you omitted the closing paragraph of our letter, which we regard as the most important sentence in it, having a qualifying influence on all the rest. It reads thus: My paper on this subject I read by request at the annual meeting of the Ontario Creamery Association. This association also requested of me leave to publish it in their annual report, so that if "Subscriber" will exercise a little patience he will know exactly what I said, and if, then, he or any other man wishes to criticize it, I am ready.

Believe, sir, you will have the fairness to publish my communications on this subject in full, and I promise you I will make them short. In justice to myself I ask it, and for the honor of editorial fairness. A grave charge is brought against me in the columns of your paper, and I appeal to your honor as a journalist and as a man to give me that opportunity of defending myself which you yourself would desire if placed in my position. Truly yours,

THOS. SHAW.

Hamilton, 16th May, 1887.

This second reply was accompanied by a letter which reads thus:

Hamilton, May 16th, 1887.

W. WELD ESQ.,

Ed. and prop. *Farmer's Advocate*, London, Ont.

DEAR SIR,—Please find enclosed a second paper from me defending myself in reference to the attack made upon me by "Subscriber" in the *Advocate* for April. Please oblige by publishing this paper in the June issue. My last letter was only published in part. This must have been unknown to you, as I cannot believe that you would be so unfair as to allow a serious charge to be brought against me in your paper and then garble my letters of defence. I will not believe this unless forced to. I trust, therefore, that this letter and all succeeding ones that you receive from me on the subject may be published in full in the *Advocate*. Strike my statements as hard as you please, but give