

SKILL IN FARMING.

Prof. James W. Robertson at a Dairy Convention at Seaford, Ont.

A great many people have the idea that a man who farms does not require any skill in the carrying on of his occupation—that skill belongs to professional men, and is necessary for them only. Now a man who farms, from the nature of his calling, must essentially be a man of skill, and then a man of strength, and not first a man of strength and then a man of skill. A man can overcome difficulties much more successfully through skillful operations than through the application of mere physical strength. The day for purely physical strength has long gone by and men who would farm with profit must farm with skill. The prevalent idea is like this, that the dairyman among farmers is a man whose occupation consists in producing or manipulating or selling milk. He may perhaps rise to be a manufacturer of the products of milk, but beyond that measure of work, men think he requires to know nothing and do nothing. I will try and make my meaning clear. I will try, first, as to why a man needs skill in carrying on the work of a dairy farm. It is his business to find food for the others of the race, because most of the food we consume from our tables comes a product of some dairy farmer's skill, if the single commodity, called fish, be excepted. If you go through the whole list you will find that most of them belong to the products of dairy farming. The man who finds food for all the world must be a skillful man, because his occupation demands skill. It gives him a sphere for the exercise of skill of the highest order. As a man produces food he will have to seek that food from two sources of supply, from plants and from animals, and through these from all the resources of nature that are put there to be brought out by the application of his skill. But he is more than a producer, he becomes a manufacturer of foods such as are made by animals on the farm—milk, cheese, butter, beef and things of that sort. In that way you see a man requires first the deepest and highest and farthest reaching skill, that he may control the forces of nature and make them operate for his service. He requires skill for that, he requires skill to understand the operation of machinery whereby he elaborates raw products into finished goods. You see there are avenues for the exercise of skill. His judgment must first determine the kind of plant that will render him the most service directly, or indirectly, through animals. A man would never think of growing strawberries for the production of milk. In that case his cow would consume more value in strawberries than she would produce in milk. I have known a cow to eat two baskets of strawberries, but they did not increase her milk supply in the least. I have merely given that absurd illustration to show that, while men do not grow strawberries as a rule for the feeding of dairy cows, they sometimes grow a product on their farm that is in manner, but not in degree, as extravagant for the production of milk. A man's skill shall solve for himself the question of the cheapest food, so far as its potentiality and efficacy is concerned. There is room for skill here, surely. Then a man's skill shall not merely select the kind of plants that he shall grow, but his skill shall select the varieties of the plants. In the growing of oats a man may select any one of 200 varieties, and if he selects them in a haphazard fashion they will serve him in a haphazard way. My friend, Professor Saunders, told me that by careful selection of single grains of a variety of the oat plant he obtained three thousand nine hundred odd grains from the planting of one seed. If we can be skillful in selecting seeds of equal vitality and vigor, we would not merely get a thirty-fold, but a three-hundred-fold, service from the crops that we grow. A man growing crops may even get a five-hundred return from the seed if he will sow the right sort. Then a man's skill shall make preparation for the furnishing of food, for the seed which he plants, and many a man by failing to supply food for the plants which grow on his fields is unable to find food for himself. Beneficent nature is always just and generous, and she will richly repay a man for the application of thought and skill that he may bestow on her. The tiller of the soil will find the proper kind of plant and place it in the ground. A man's skill makes preparation for its food by cultivation. When a man cultivates his soil he is not merely probing about with instruments and tools; if he does this he is exercising no skill. A man's skill shall look right into the soil, and shall go on, so acting upon and acting through it that his skill shall reach up through the soil and govern the sun that shines over his farm. It is the duty of the farmer to exercise his skill in such a way on the soil that he may harness the old sun every morning and make it do his will. He cannot do that if he has not skill. The sun, with his strength, energy and potentiality, thrills down for our service when he tries to store these into plants. We eat to get strength that we may control the strength and do something. Whence comes the strength? From the old sun. I want from food strength and sunshine, and when I get too really strong but I get the strength and no sunshine. (Laughter.) The old sun is streaming like this on all the fields; if he comes to a man's farm whose fields have no plant food, then the old sun looks into that man's soil, and finding no material into which to store his strength, he merely loafs around that field. When a horse pulls me in a wagon the horse is merely expending what he got from the sun; when the engine is puffing along it is only expending what the old sun stored in the fuel centuries ago. When I eat my own food I am merely getting for my use the energy that the old sun accumulated in it under the direction of the skill of some man whose right it was to rule his acts and make him subservient to him. A man who would be a successful farmer needs to be a man of skill and then a man of strength. If a man goes at his work with his fist he is not so successful as if he goes at it with his head, because with the latter he could clear a way for the application of the strength which he has. Therefore let a man exercise his skill in such a way that all the powers of nature will serve him, and that he will have dominion over the sun and over the water in the soil. A man not only needs skill, but he needs to apply his skill. The man who applies his skill to the growth of a plant can do so best along two lines. First along the line of skillfully adapting suitable plants to conditions and circumstances of his farm and locality, and then along the line of handling plants, that the strength of the old sun shall not be wasted or lost. First, let

him try to get within his grasp some of nature's powers for his service, and then let him so use that power back into the world that he will not lose anything, but thereby increase its intensity.

Sparrows Stop a Clock.

The Sarnia town clock stopped at 4:30 o'clock Thursday morning, and Mr. Williams, on going to ascertain the cause, found that the hands had been securely tied down by strands of twine and grass. The mischief had been done by a pair of English sparrows, who had selected the angle formed by the hands as a site for a nest. The movements of the hands interfered with their plans, and the birds put their wits to work to devise a remedy that would secure the stability of the nest. Their first scheme was to wind the shaft on which the hands are pivoted round and round with grass and cords. That failing, they tied the hands to each other and to the framework in such a manner that it took considerable time and a great deal of labor on Mr. Williams's part to remove the obstructions. The engineering skill displayed by the birds in accomplishing their object showed that they possessed reasoning power of no mean order, besides an amount of industry and perseverance in gathering the material within the few hours at their disposal that is almost incredible.

A Wise Employee.

Bob—How do you stand in with you employer so well, Tom, you never laugh at his jokes?
Tom—No; but I dine at his restaurant, and pretending not to see him, I tell all his stories, saying loudly, "I can't tell it as well as he can, but here's a rattling good yarn Mr. D. told us this morning." I've been promoted three times this year.

CANADA'S GREAT FAIR.

A Great List of Entries and Many Attractions for the Coming Show at Toronto, From Sept. 8th to the 20th.

The success that has attended the Great Industrial Fair, which is held annually at Toronto, has been remarkable, and it is evident that the exhibition for the present year, which is to be held from the 8th to the 20th of next month, will already have received from all parts of the Dominion, the United States and Great Britain, are sufficient to fill all the buildings on the grounds, and they are reported to be of a much finer quality than any heretofore exhibited. A large entry lists generally a good attendance of visitors, and very cheap fares and excursions have been announced by all the Railway and Steamboat lines from all parts of Canada and the adjoining States, this indication will doubtless be fully realized on the present occasion. The Governor-General and Exhibition, several more new buildings have been erected this year and there is no space to spare. Special exhibits have been entered from Spain, British Columbia, Manitoba, and other sections of Canada, and large displays will be made by the Dominion and Ontario Experimental Farms. A long list of special features have been provided including a large Wild West Show, grand displays of fireworks, concluding with the magnificent spectacle, "Last Days of Pompeii," Edison's wonderful talking dolls, a great dog show, and a multitude of other features that cannot fail to entertain the many thousands that will doubtless visit the great Fair. Full particulars of all that is to be seen will be contained in the Official Programmes which will be issued in a day or two. Over two hundred and fifty thousand people visited the Toronto Fair last year, and, as the attendance has been gradually increasing each year, it is probable that this number will be exceeded. A large number of conventions and meetings are to be held at Toronto during the Fair, among which are those of the Stock Breeders' Association, the Ontario Creamery Association, the Canadian Medical Institute, the Dog Fanciers, &c., and visitors to the Fair will have an opportunity of attending these meetings. All entries close on the 15th inst., and intending exhibitors should govern themselves accordingly.

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