

The Farmer's Advocate

HOME MAGAZINE.

THE LEADING AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL IN THE DOMINION.

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State Landlordism.

The committee appointed by the British Government to investigate the land problem of England, as affecting the rural worker, have made the following recommendations:

1. A widespread system of small holdings cultivated by tenant occupiers holding the land at equitable rents with security of tenure.
2. The system to be safeguarded by the establishment of land courts with judicial powers.
3. The establishment of wages boards to adjust wages according to local conditions.
4. The readjustment of hours of labor and more frequent holidays.

A system of land purchase financed by the State was rejected by the committee on various grounds, the chief of which was that a peasant proprietary must sooner or later become burdened with debt, and sink into the clutches of the money-lender.

The cablegrams do not indicate that the commission considered the idea of the government purchasing land and acting the part of the landlord, letting it out in small parcels on long-term leases, but keeping the whole proposition on a business basis. Such a suggestion is probably too radical as yet even for the redoubtable Lloyd George. It would, to be sure, entail problems in administration, but whether these would be much more difficult than those involved in the establishment of Land Courts and Wages' Boards is debatable. One great advantage of state ownership would be that any further unearned increment in the value of the land would accrue to the public instead of to the individual. With the increasingly dense population of the world and with the settlement of the great areas of hitherto unoccupied land in America and Africa, land values the world over are likely to greatly increase. And why should the increase not belong to the people as a whole? There are many arguments in favor of land being owned by those who use it, but if, as in Britain, the land is to be largely worked by tenants anyway, why not let the state become the landlord, advanced reasoners inquire? And why, they also urge,

should not cities own their sites, letting the lots on long-term leases to those who wish to build on them? Of course it would be necessary to have carefully worked-out provisions for periodic adjustments of rent and renewal of leaseholds on fair terms. Such a system would confer little or no immediate advantage on the community, because the net return from rentals would no more than pay the interest on the investment, but the prospective advantage, if the scheme proved practicable, should be immense, for all the enormous future increment in value would then belong to the community whose enterprise and effort created it. In time the increasing rentals would not only pay compound interest on the investment, but leave a margin out of which might be paid police, educational and other civic services now met by a tax-rate levy. The prospect is attractive but is not yet an issue of practical politics, and may not be for a long time to come. However, it may some day command attention, and perhaps sooner than we think.

Nature's Diary.

By A. B. Klugh, M. A.

Our deciduous trees are now garbed in their brilliant and beautiful autumn dress. The leaves, pale-green as they open in the spring, deep-green and affording a most grateful shade in the summer, are even more glorious in their death. What causes the leaves to turn color in the autumn? The usual answer is "frost." But this is not correct, for many trees, turn before we have had any frost at all, and in some years all the trees show their brilliant tints before any frosts have occurred.

The real cause of autumn coloration is as follows: The leaves are the mouths and stomachs of the trees. In the cells of the green leaf are bodies called chloroplasts, which contain a green coloring matter termed chlorophyll (from two Greek words meaning "leaf-green"). This chlorophyll, by the aid of sunlight, turns the carbon derived from the air and the water taken up by the roots into starch, which is the food of the tree. Now at the end of the growing season the chlorophyll breaks down into substances which are yellow or red in color, and we have our autumn tints.

At the time that this breaking-down process occurs the constituents of the leaf which are of value to the trees are withdrawn into the petiole (leaf-stalk) and on down into the twigs and trunk. So that when the leaf falls from the tree only a mass of dead and useless cells is lost.

Frost is no more responsible for leaf-fall than it is for autumn coloration. Quite early in the season a layer of cork begins to form at the base of the petiole, and this layer gradually grows in until the leaf is cut off the tree. If we get a heavy rain storm and then a strong wind in the late autumn we find that a host of leaves have fallen, for the slender thread which remains uncut at the base of the leaf is broken by the action of the wind on the heavy, wet leaves.

The shedding of leaves by the deciduous trees is an adaptation to a climate in which seasons unfavorable to growth occur periodically. In our Canadian climate this season is, of course, the winter. It is not the cold which is the prime factor in rendering that season unfit for growth, but it is the extreme dryness. All moisture is then in a solid condition, as ice or snow, and is consequently unavailable for use by the tree. The evergreens take a different method of meeting this season dryness. They have leaves which are thick, and which are protected by a heavy cuticle.

In autumn coloration we find that most species have their characteristic tints, the red maple scarlet, the elm yellow and so on. Some species, however, have quite a range of coloration, for instance the sugar maple, in which species some trees are red, some yellow, and others display both these colors and intermediate shades.

We have in Eastern Canada the finest display of autumn tints to be found anywhere in the world, and at this season of the year we enjoy this glorious exhibit to the utmost.

In our rambles in the woods we frequently come across a heavy, lumbering animal, and our behavior towards it marks us at once as a true woodsman or as a greenhorn. If the former we leave it to continue its ponderous way in peace; if the latter we kill it. The animal referred to is the porcupine, and as it is the only animal found in our woods which a lost man without a

gun can kill, all true woodmen leave it unmolested.

We have two mammals in our woods which are most efficiently protected and know it, but they are protected in very different ways,—the porcupine and the skunk.

Against all enemies but man the porcupine's quills make a very efficient armor. When desperately hungry some of the large flesh-eaters will make a meal of a porcupine. But the meal is often a fatal one, as the quills are not only sharp-pointed, but have numerous small barbs, so that they work in and in until a vital part is pierced. Thus some time after its demise the porcupine avenges itself.

There is a widely current popular idea that a porcupine can throw its quills. This is entirely erroneous. The nearest that a porcupine comes to throwing its quills is when it presents its back to an enemy and suddenly springs its tail, striking its opponent in the face and filling it full of quills.

This animal makes its home in a hollow log or in a den among the rocks. The female has a pair of twins each season.

The main food of the porcupine consists of the bark of trees, twigs and leaves. It has a positive mania for salt, though this must be an acquired taste for it is hard to see how, under natural conditions, this animal could have come across any salt. Whenever a porcupine finds an old empty pork barrel or any other wooden object which has been in contact with salt, it returns to it again and again until it has chewed it all away. I have seen the mangers in abandoned stables almost demolished by porcupines because of the trace of salt in them.

The derivation of the word porcupine is not, however, from its pining for pork or for pork barrels, but from the French "porc épin" meaning "spiny pig."

The only note I have heard this species utter is a peculiar whining cry, which is heard usually at night.

Commission Needed for Bank Inspection.

"I have the best of reasons for believing that if bankers felt that all bank audits would be made on uniform, thorough and broadly intelligent lines, most of them would welcome the measure (for shareholders' audit) heartily. But what will the condition be if some audits are made with a high degree of intelligence as regards matters of vital importance, while others are made with a microscopic attention to detail, but perfunctory as to real essentials?"

These words are by Vere C. Brown, Superintendent of Western Branches of the Canadian Bank of Commerce. Mr. Brown describes the efficient method of internal inspection by means of which the head offices keep check on the operations of their branches, and refers to the highly developed and efficiently controlled systems of our best banks.

"But," he concludes, "there may possibly be some exceptions, and in order to make audits really effective, it would be desirable that the knowledge and experience gained by the auditors of the best-administered banks should be available to the auditors of other institutions. How this could be brought about is a question on which it would be premature to offer any opinion. It is only to be hoped that in due course some plan will be evolved under which the amendment to the Bank Act in this connection will be made to effectively fulfill the purpose intended."

Would not a banking commission fill the bill?

City Growth and Cost of Living.

That the cost of living has been rising for many years is well known, and the cause must be world-wide, for the increase is world-wide as shown by statistics compiled by the London Board of Trade and just published in a volume of 400 pages. Taking the year 1900 as a basis it appears that the price of foodstuffs had, in 1912, risen 15 per cent in Great Britain and France, 20 per cent in Italy, 23 per cent in Holland, 32 per cent in Belgium, 35 per cent in Austria, 38 per cent in Japan (1911), 39 per cent in the United States (1911), and 51 per cent in Canada. Among the world-wide causes that have been suggested are the greater mining of gold, reducing its value, and the progressive withdrawing of labor from agriculture to manufacture. That the percentage of increase should be larger in some of the important food-producing countries than in Great Britain, is worthy of note. It is especially remarkable that in Canada it should be highest of all. The causes assigned have been operating in the Dominion with full force. From being a food-exporting nation we have become, in some lines, food-importing. While we boast of city growth, what is the consequence to the farm?