

# The Farming World

For Farmers and Stockmen

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## Election Atermath



THE elections are over. The campaign has been short and decisive and the country will now settle down to its regular routine with a feeling of relief that political strife will lie dormant for another five years. The return of the Laurier Government to power means that there will be no radical changes made in connection with the work of the Department of Agriculture. The movements inaugurated by the Hon. Mr. Fisher during the past few years for the benefit of the farmers of this country and which we are free to say are making progress along agricultural lines will have ample time to be worked out to the fullest extent. Mr. Fisher has shown characteristic energy and foresight in the administration of his department and the experience of the past four years indicates that the farmers' interests will not suffer at his hands.

During election time the farmer assumes a very important place in the eye of the politician. He is catered to, patronized and everything possible done to obtain his favor for one policy or the other. He is made to feel that he is the most important individual in the country whose every desire shall be gratified. And there is, perhaps, nothing wrong in this. But what is most peculiar about the situation is that as soon as the elections are over the farmer drops largely from view politically speaking, while the good things sometimes go largely to other classes in the community not so deserving.

It is not, however, this particular phase of the situation that we wish to draw attention to just here. If the farming community is the important element in this country during an election contest why is it not the important element all the time? If it is not we believe it should be. Nearly one-half of the population of the Dominion is made up of farmers. But is this half the power and influence in this country, politically speaking, that it should be? We hardly think so. And one of the reasons why it is not is because the farmers as a class do not rise up to the privileges which their position and numbers in the country give them. They are seemingly content to let others take the lead and remain in the background while those no better qualified than they direct affairs of state. To such an extent is this the case that many people in other walks of life are led to believe that the farmer is not capable of taking the position in the affairs of the country he has a right to expect.

The farmer's calling is neither ignoble nor undignified. The prosperity of nations since time was, has been closely connected with the farming industry. On this continent especially, both in the United States and Canada, the wealth and prosperity of the country is inseparable from the cultivator of the soil. No other vocation surpasses

farming as a reliable and stable profession, and in no other calling is the individual so completely the architect of his own fortune. George Washington once said: "Agriculture is the most useful, the most honorable and the most necessary of the professions." Let the farmer then rise up to the position that the dignity and the necessity of this vocation demands. Let his influence be so exerted all the time that it will not need an election to show what his real power in the country is.

## The Germ Theory and Soil Fertility

A somewhat remarkable deliverance on the subject of soil fertility was made by Prof. McAlpine, of the West of Scotland Agricultural College, at the opening ceremonies of that institution a few weeks ago. He has long been recognized as a genius in the teaching of agricultural botany and is perfectly familiar with crop plants. The Professor's argument on the subject is summarized by *The North British Agriculturist* as follows:

Soil fertility can only result from germ activity in the soil; the conditions favorable for the active operations of soil germs are the first things to be studied in manuring to profit; farmyard and other manures are not applied for the direct feeding of plants, but for the feeding of the soil bacteria, which convert these manures into substances suitable for assimilation with the tissues of the plants; and, finally, a due supply of lime in the surface soil is absolutely essential to the due discharge of the functions of these soil bacteria, whose activity is the sole source of soil fertility.

This germ theory in connection with soil fertility is not altogether a new thing, though it has never been brought before the agricultural public in so prominent a manner as Prof. McAlpine has done. It has been referred to in these columns a few times, but only in an incidental way. But nowhere in the reports of the leading experiment stations in Great Britain or on this continent has it been referred to. The theory, however, emanating, as it does, from so prominent an agricultural scientist, comes as a surprise to thinking farmers who have been taught to believe that plants take their food direct from the manure or food supplied without any go-between. One of the striking things in connection with it is the necessity for lime in the surface soil in order that these soil bacteria may be able to discharge their functions.

The development of this new theory in Great Britain is not without its humorous side. About ten years ago a lecturer in the Agricultural Department of Edinburgh University began to teach these new ideas as to germ activity and soil fertility, and the result was that the professor in charge of this branch called a meeting of the other lecturers in this branch—but without success—in order to get them to expel their fellow-lecturer on the ground that the teaching of such doctrines showed that the party teaching them must be "rapidly qualifying for a lunatic asylum." The same lecturer, however, continued this line of work with the result that to-day the idea of a germ theory prevails largely among many leading British agriculturists, not the least of whom is Prof. McAlpine.

The practical bearing of this germ theory may not be very important, though it may help to solve many of the