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EDITORIAL.

The Dominion Minister of Agriculture to Visit the West.

Our numerous readers in Manitoba and the Northwest will be glad to learn that during the ensuing summer Hon. Sydney Fisher, Dominion Minister of Agriculture, intends to pay a visit to this extensive portion of the Dominion. The honorable gentleman was called upon by an Ottawa correspondent of the FARMER'S ADVOCATE and asked to state what were the prospects of his undertaking a visit to the Northwest country this year. "I hope to be able to go to the principal points in both Manitoba and the Northwest immediately after the present session of Parliament closes," said Hon. Mr. Fisher. "I would have liked to have gone last year, but the length of time that I spent in Great Britain in bringing the merits of our products before the dealers and consumers of that country put it out of my power to do so. I hope, however, to see for myself the marvelous development of Manitoba and the Territories before the year closes, and if time permits to extend my tour to British Columbia, for I have many pressing invitations from the Pacific country as well as from the Prairie Provinces to visit and address public meetings on matters pertaining to their agricultural development."

This declaration will be welcome intelligence to the many thousands of ADVOCATE readers in Manitoba and the Northwest, who know that the Minister of Agriculture is himself one of their craft, and has always exhibited a warm interest in the welfare of the farming community. Before he was a Minister of the Crown, Hon. Mr. Fisher visited the Northwest and saw for himself the vast possibilities of this fertile territory, so that he is not a stranger, but this will be the first occasion on which he has been west of Port Arthur since his appointment as Minister of Agriculture. The Western country has agricultural conditions and needs peculiar to itself, requiring careful study and attention on the part of the holder of that portfolio. When the vast extent of land yet available for settlement is considered, the inrush of new settlers on these fertile plains, and the rapid growth of towns and cities, it would seem to be in many ways the present strategic point of Canada. We trust Mr. Fisher will be able to meet the representative farmers and stockmen in various districts, and confer with them regarding the problems of the West.

Sow Clover.

The splendid crops of clover harvested in all the Eastern Provinces last year must have proved of great value in the feeding of stock this winter, since there is no fodder crop grown in this country which so fully meets the needs of the animal economy, being more nearly a balanced ration than any other. Large areas of clover sod were doubtless plowed down last fall in preparation for this year's crops of grain, roots and corn, and will tell mightily for good as a fertilizing agency and in supplying the necessary vegetable matter which will improve the mechanical condition of the land, enabling it to retain moisture and to keep the land from running together and baking from the action of the sun after heavy rains, as all clay soils especially are liable to do. The clover plant stores up in its tissues large supplies of nitrogen, one of the most valuable and expensive fertilizers gathered from the air, and thus cheaply provides one of the most effectual fertilizing agencies for the development of most farm crops, while the roots penetrate deeply into the subsoil and bring from these lower strata additional stores of plant food. Clover when fed to stock goes back upon the land in the form of rich manure to recruit its fertility, and thus leaves it in about as good condition as it found it, while the returns from the stock fed, in the form of beef, butter, cheese, bacon, mutton, and wool, will prove as satisfactory, taking one year with another, as any of the products of the farm. Experiments conducted at the Central Experimental Farm last year showed that the weight of clover leaves, stems and roots produced by the end of October from seed sown with a grain crop in April ran from six to eight tons per acre, and chemical analyses have proven that each ton of this material adds to the soil almost as much nitrogen as one and a half tons of barnyard manure. It has also been demonstrated that land on which clover has thus been grown has given from five to ten bushels per acre more than similar soil where no clover was sown, the treatment being the same.

The low price of clover seed at the present time may well be taken advantage of by farmers, and liberal seeding should be the rule. It will pay well to sow clover with all grain crops, even if it has to be plowed down next fall, since the clover seed can be sown with the grain without extra labor, and the cost of growing it is only that of the seed, which at present prices is only about seventy-five cents per acre. It will furnish some pasture for stock, and will more than pay for itself as a fertilizer when plowed down. We are aware of the discouragements met with in some districts from repeated failures to secure a catch of seeds, but the doctrine of "final perseverance" is in this matter a safe one to follow, and the only safe one, for we cannot afford to give it up, and we all know that pleasant surprises sometimes await us, when the heart of the farmer is gladdened by the bloom of the clover and its sweet fragrance. It is a harbinger of good times, an omen of health and thriftiness in the farm stock, and of a profitable increase in the quantity and improvement in the quality of the products of the farm. Therefore we feel safe in urging the admonition to sow clover and keep on sowing it.

An Experiment with Salt.

An observant farmer the other day called our attention to a trial he made last season applying salt to mangels. Shortly before thinning he sowed broadcast by hand on several rows at the rate of 250 pounds per acre of salt, at the cost of 90 cents, from which he secured an increased yield of 75 bushels of roots per acre, compared with those unsalted. That is to say, an outlay of a little over one cent gave him one bushel in return, which he thought was cheap mangels. As to any after-effect upon the land in relation to other crops, he, of course, could not speak personally. While an excess of salt is injurious to vegetation, it is well known that very considerable quantities are deposited through the atmosphere on lands near the seashore, and the spreading of seaweed on land is common. With many of the best Old Country root-growing farmers it is usual to apply from 4 to 5 cwt. per acre upon their mangel land. It is sometimes mixed with the manure, and sometimes applied as a top dressing before the last horse-hoeing. The action of salt in promoting vegetable growth does not appear to be fully understood, but is regarded as indirect in its influence, neither sodium nor chlorine —the two constituents of salt—being considered absolutely necessary plant foods, unless in very small quantities. It has a mechanical effect upon soil something similar to that of lime, but its most important action is as a solvent, liberating necessary plant food. Being of an antiseptic character, it tends to prevent rankness of growth under certain conditions. Hence, we can readily understand that its effect may be favorable under some circumstances, and not so under others. While it increases the quantity of the crop, it has been found in the case of beet root to lessen the total quantity of dry matter and sugar, and in potatoes the percentage of starch. With regard to its use on mangels, which shrewd Old Country farmers practice, and the successful trial referred to above—which, by the way, was not our informant's first favorable experience with salt on mangels—it would be well in this country to have further trials this season by farmers and experimenters, the results of which we shall gladly make known. In the meantime it would seem that the best results would be had when applied in conjunction with other manuring, and at a rate not exceeding 4 or 5 cwts. per acre.

The Horse Trade.

An able letter from a worthy authority upon horse matters appears in our Stock department in this issue. The opening point made by Mr. Innis is undoubtedly well taken, as not only are we not producing the high classes of horses it pays to export, but we feel safe in stating that the horse stock of the country doing the farm work has not for a long time been of as low an average quality as at the present time. This is a fact to be deplored, and one which can be overcome only by persistent and liberal effort. Because farmers have not made money by breeding horses for export, that is not sufficient reason for ceasing to endeavor to raise foals, because we must have horses to do our work, and so long as we depend on buying, so long will we be required to put up with low-grade animals, such as no true horseman can take a pride in following or tending.

Mr. Innis has referred to draft, carriage, roadster, saddle and hunter horses as the useful and profitable classes of horses to raise, and has also mentioned the British market as our only important outlet outside our home demand. While Britain has been our chief foreign horse market, we are led to believe, from a recently issued report upon markets for American horses in foreign countries, that Germany, Belgium, France and some other European countries do not raise nearly as many good horses as they need to conduct their business. The information contained in the report referred to has been secured by American Consular agents, who have made thorough investigations into the needs of the horse trade in the various European horse-consuming centers. It has been shown that the needs in the various countries, in a general way, call for the same classes of animals, while it is strongly pointed out that misfits, scrubs and badly broken horses will not do; but a young, good, sound, well-broken horse, with plenty of bone and muscle, compactly built, of almost any recognized class or type, will sell well. A general class, for which the demand in all European countries seems to be growing, is that for army purposes. It requires about 2,000 horses annually to remount the English cavalry, and of these Canada has supplied in recent years from 4 to 5 per cent. Cavalry horses are divided into two classes, ranging from 14 to 16 hands high, and in weight from about 800 to 1,150 pounds. They must be sound, not vicious, of solid dark colors, without prominent marks. A well-bred, low, short, thickset horse, with strong flanks, good high tail, buttocks full and square, ribs rounded out so as to "furnish" well, well-shaped legs, with plenty of bone, and good feet, is about the thing desired. Prices vary, $180 to $200 being received for suitable horses in France, while in Germany the price depends on the Government to which the horse is sold, and usually averages about $250 per head.

Horses for business purposes are required in enormous numbers in the large European cities. For example, London is claimed to have in daily use 750,000 horses. It is estimated that these give about an average of five years' service, so that this market alone requires 150,000 new horses annually