

Rounding Things Up.

By Peter McArthur.

I see by the papers that they are having a dry-farming congress out West. It sounds good to me, though I do not know exactly what it means. This summer I have had my fill of wet-farming, and I think I'd like a little dry-farming for a change. As I look back I seem to see things through a veil of rain. It was wet in the spring, wet in the haying, wetter in the wheat harvest, wettest of all in the oat harvest, and during the apple-packing we are having a deluge. I think we shall welcome the frost this year, if it will only harden things up and let us know again what it feels like to have something firm underfoot. Lowell speaks somewhere of the joy of being "knee-deep in June," but I guess he had no reference to the sensations we feel on being knee-deep in October. If there is any oldest inhabitant who knows of a wetter season than this let him now speak or forever after be silent. When I reach the point where I shall be sitting in a warm corner talking about the weather "we used to have," I expect to put everything else in the shade with my accounts of the summer of 1912. I shall probably be telling that before it was over a lot of farmers in this district had developed web-feet like the ducks and that the cattle in the pasture in some cases sprouted fins. A vivid imagination working on the kind of weather that we have had this summer should be able to produce some pretty fair-sized whoppers. At present, however, the wet is too much of a stern reality to stimulate any play of fancy. My imagination is just about as water-soaked as everything else in the country.

No shipwrecked sailor standing on one foot on the wave-washed top of a peak of rock in mid-ocean ever welcomed a rescuing vessel more gladly than I did the appearance of a man who could be coaxed, wheedled and hired into finishing the job of packing my apples. For five days I had packed from morning till night doing my own sorting and pressing. No, I am not going to tell you how many barrels I packed in those five days. It wouldn't look as big in print as it seemed when I was doing it. I didn't know there were so many apples in the world as I found in that orchard when I had to handle them one by one, look them over carefully for worms, spots and blemishes, and then place them gently in the barrel. To add to my discomfort, the press I had bought was one of the kind that is made to sell and not to work with, and when the real packer came to the orchard he refused to have anything to do with the wobbly toy. He had to get a real press, and as I look at him heading up a barrel, I feel like going and blowing up the foundry from which I got the press that made apple-packing such a ticklish job for me. As nearly as the weather will allow, the apples are being sorted and packed at a workman-like rate, and long before this is on the press I hope that they will all be snugly stored in a fruit car and on their way to Edmonton. After they are once shipped I shall do my best to forget them for a couple of weeks. Even at the best speed it will take them that time to reach their destination. I shall also avoid reading the weather reports, though provision has been made to have the car heated in case it should strike frosty weather. But even if I can't keep from worrying, there is one comfort in the fact that I will have my worries bunched. All the results of my experiments at farming, I mean the financial results, will be bound up in the fate of that car.

The barrels, picking, packing and freight are costing me something more than I am getting for the hay, pasture and oats, and if the venture fails everything will go down together. The great advantage of this will be that I can do my sorrowing all at once and get done with it. If, on the other hand, the venture goes through properly, I shall get my returns all in a lump, and it will look bigger and more encouraging than if it came in dribs and drabs. When that car is started on its way I shall have time to wallow through the potato ground and see what has been spared by the rot, but I mustn't think about that or I shall be quoting from Joel, the son of Pethuel, who apparently wrote his prophecy in one of the worst years for farming known to history. Anyway, the celery looks good, and so far it has escaped all bugs, blights, fungi, and other pestilences that walk in the night. If I get it nicely pitted before it is frost-bitten there will be some good eating ahead for the winter. Visiting scientists say it is the finest piece of celery they have seen this year, and there are about fifteen hundred heads in the patch. Even if that carload of apples does not realize all that it should, we shall still have the garden to fall back on, and if there is time we can put up a few barrels of sauerkraut. But I do hope it will stop raining some time soon.

Apparently good apples are not so plentiful in the cities as we were led to suppose earlier in the season. During the past few days I have received orders that I cannot fill for about fifty barrels. One order from Ottawa offered three dollars f.o.b. at Appin for twenty-four barrels of Spies, and the others all expressed themselves as willing to pay whatever I asked. I think it would be an interesting experiment another year to run a small advertisement in some city paper so as to get orders direct from the customer. The great difficulty about this would, no doubt, be that all the customers would want Spies, nothing but Spies. A few of my correspondents have been indefinite enough to say that what they want is a barrel or two of good cooking apples, but most of them are quite explicit in saying that they want No. 1 Spies, Baldwins, or Greenings. If I yielded to their requests I would, no doubt, be obliged to keep all the Peewaukees and Ben Davises, for, besides being good apples, the Spies can be used as a lever in moving the inferior varieties. Right here, it seems to me, that there is a point worth laying to heart. The people of the country are being educated to the fact that only the best apples are worth paying big prices for, and the man planting out a young orchard would be foolish to put out any but the established standard varieties. No matter how wonderful new varieties may look in the lithographed catalogues, it may be hard to dispose of them to a properly-educated public. There is little danger that such standards as the Baldwins and Spies will be supplanted by any other variety, though I have heard it said that in a few generations they may possibly run out, just the same as potatoes run out. A prominent fruit-grower was telling me some time ago that he has a couple of Rhode Island Greening trees that are over a hundred years old, and that were grafted from stock that went back almost to the original tree. He told me that these Greenings are almost a different apple from those now offered for sale, and his explanation was that the Greening has run out, just like the Early Rose potato, but I seem to have read somewhere that good potatoes are not going to be allowed to run out any more. The process is being reversed. By careful selection better potatoes are produced each year, and new strains are being developed that are superior to the parent stock. I wonder if it is possible if the same thing can be done with apples, so that instead of having them run out they will improve in quality. Of course working with grafts is a different matter from reproducing from the seed, but I am getting to have a good deal of faith in the scientists, and shall not be at all surprised to hear that some Burbank has discovered how to improve even our best apples, by some kind of grafting selection.

Death of Simpson Rennie.

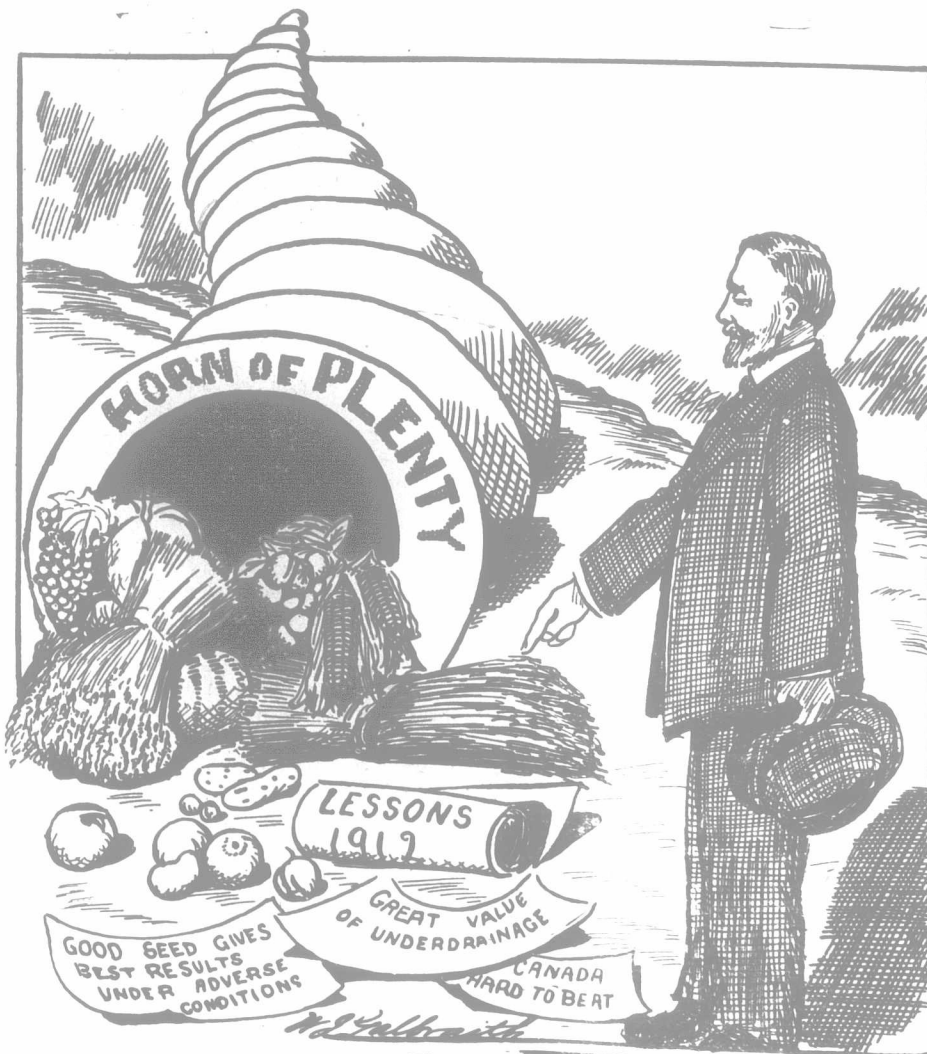
The demise of Simpson Rennie, formerly of Scarboro Township, Ontario, and widely known as a veteran farmer of the very best type, removes a man who was highly respected by all having the pleasure of his acquaintance. He was certainly one of the most skillful farmers in Canada, as anyone having been privileged to visit his farm will cheerfully acknowledge. His pride in his farm was as boundless as his efforts to continue improving it were untiring. He was a member of the Agricultural Club, formed in Scarboro Township thirty-five years ago, and attributed much of his success as a farmer to his association and exchange of thought with other farmers, which to him was a pleasure, and he generally gave more than he received. In 1883, he won the gold medal for the best-kept farm in a "good farms competition." Three years later, he captured the sweepstakes prize for all Ontario in a similar competition. He retired from active farming a few years ago, and resided in the city of Toronto, but was frequently prevailed upon to lecture at Farmer's Institute meetings throughout the Province, and the illness which resulted in his death is said to have been contracted in Western Canada while he was judging in a crop competition. He was born in Scarboro, in March, 1840, and was in his seventy-third year when his death occurred. Mr. Rennie was a man of sterling character, whose word was as good as his bond. He was a brother to William Rennie, for several years superintendent of the Ontario Agricultural Farm at Guelph, who died two years ago. He is survived by his wife, two sons and a sister.

A Churchless Community.

In the United States a great deal of careful research is being made in the conditions prevailing in rural communities. From Vermont, a territory is reported seven miles by thirteen miles in area where there is only one place of Christian worship, and that is a schoolhouse, there being no church building. In this territory, during the past fourteen months, there were two murders, three suicides and 13 illegitimate births. It is also declared that almost every house in this district covers some one who is regarded as "a little off" mentally, either a member of the family or a farm hand.

With good feed and care, it costs about ten to eleven cents per month to keep hens of the general-purpose breeds, and about nine cents per month for those of the non-sitting breeds.

October 1st to November 15th according to latitude is given as the best time for sowing oats in the United States Cotton belt.



Thankful.

Canadian Farmer—Plenty and to spare, and the year has taught valuable lessons.

OCTOBER

Poles Us

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