

EDITORIAL.

The New Canadian Minister of Agriculture.

Sydney A. Fisher, farmer and stock-breeder, whose portrait adorns our first page, has been appointed Minister of Agriculture in the new Canadian Government. As most of our older readers are aware, he is the owner of Alva Stock Farm (comprising some four hundred fertile acres, near Knowlton, P. Q.), whose Guernseys have won distinction in the show-rings for their owner and breeder. It ranks among the most beautiful and best-managed farms of that thrifty agricultural district, and its dairy and other products, as well as its live stock, attest the practical skill and enterprise of its owner.

Hon. Mr. Fisher was a son of Dr. Arthur Fisher, of Montreal, whose grandfather came to Canada from Dunkeld, Scotland. He was born on June 12th, 1850, so that now he is in the very heyday of a vigorous manhood. Educated in the High School and McGill University, he graduated in Trinity College, Cambridge University; hence, his attainments in that respect are of the very highest order. For twenty-three years past he has devoted his whole time and abilities to the study and practice of agriculture, which he very properly regards as a science as well as a business, the principles of which men must observe if they would succeed. Connected with no other business or profession, he once bluntly and modestly described himself as "only a farmer." He was first elected M. P. for his present seat (Brome) at the general election of 1882, and was re-elected in 1887. In 1891 he sustained a reverse, but in the recent election he was again triumphant. During his nine years of parliamentary service in the House of Commons he interested himself especially in whatever concerned the interests of farming. His long residence and active interest in the affairs of his county caused him to be made Justice of the Peace for Bedford district. For a number of years he has been a director and Vice-President of the Quebec Provincial Dairy Association, director and Vice-President of the Provincial Fruit Growers' Association, and a director of the Agricultural Society of his own county, so that both locally and provincially he has earned the confidence of his fellows.

When the British Association for the Advancement of Science assembled at Montreal in 1884, he was asked to write a paper, which was presented to that learned body, on behalf of farming in the Province of Quebec.

The new Premier, in casting about for a representative of agriculture in his Cabinet, accorded to Mr. Fisher the honor for which his experience and attainments alike seem to have pre-eminently fitted him. Canada being essentially an agricultural country, we long ago took the ground that the time had arrived when the necessities of the situation demanded that the Agricultural Department should have such a man at its head. In this connection it is also satisfactory to note the presence of Hon. Mr. Joly in the Ministry, who, though not a farmer, has always taken a personal interest in the agricultural progress of his Province, especially in the matter of forestry, which is with him a great hobby. Then the new Postmaster-General, Hon. Mr. Mulock, though eminent as a lawyer and scholar, is likewise a farmer on a large scale in the County of York, Ont. Breeders will remember the vigorous and helpful way in which he brought before the last session of Parliament the matter of outrageous freight rates on breeding stock which some overreaching railway officials sought to impose last winter.

Mr. Fisher is to be congratulated upon this distinction, which we believe will command general favor; but it is a position imposing many and serious responsibilities, and we feel safe in bespeaking for him the co-operation of all who have at heart the interests of farmers and breeders, feeling certain that whatever promises to promote their interests will have his most careful and enthusiastic aid.

Our aim in the conduct of the FARMER'S ADVOCATE has been to make it of practical, timely service to the farmers and breeders of Canada; and we certainly appreciate the many letters received from readers, such as that from Mr. W. H. Bull, a progressive farmer and stockman, in another column, who says he has been both "delighted and profited by the valuable information given in its columns." He specifies one article on milk fever which saved the life of a \$300 Jersey heifer—certainly a handsome return for the \$1 invested. Once in a while we come across a farmer who "can't afford" to take the ADVOCATE, which usually turns out to be another case of "saving at the tap and wasting at the bung-hole." In these days of tremendous competition in agricultural products, and the business of farming every year requiring greater knowledge and skill, the man who thus deprives himself of helpful information simply shuts out the light that would guide him to success.

The Advantages of Sorghum.

The articles and letters which have been published recently in the ADVOCATE (two additional ones appearing in this issue) will no doubt serve to awaken fresh interest in the production of sorghum syrup, especially throughout portions of Ontario and other Eastern parts of the Dominion. The climatic and other conditions favorable to the growth of the sorghum plant correspond in the main with those for corn, the warmer sections having a decided advantage. The yields of syrup per acre reported by our contributors are large, and the syrup is well liked, selling at prices which show a good return per acre. Besides the direct return from syrup, there is the seed (growing in the form of a large dark tassel or plume on top), which ranks along with corn for feeding purposes, and of which Mr. Gray, in our July 1st issue, reported yields of from twenty-five to thirty-five bushels per acre. It is when the seed is ripe that the maximum of saccharine matter is found in the stalk, so that there is nothing to prevent a maximum crop of both being secured. The leaves, stripped off when the plant is ready to cut for the crushing-mill, make excellent fodder, Dr. Collier reporting them to have a higher nutritive value than hay or grass. There is next the bagasse, or stalks after the juice has been crushed out, analyses of which show a considerable quantity of sugar and other solids. A mixture of the leaves and fresh bagasse has been found to be of greater value as food than corn ensilage. If any readers of the ADVOCATE have had experience ensiling these by-products of sorghum we would like to hear what the result has been. In the Western States dried bagasse has been also used for fuel. The skimmings from the evaporator, settlings, etc., make a superior article of vinegar. When all these points are considered, there doubtless seems much to commend the growing of sorghum, and the letters we are publishing from our readers show that this line of farming is being successfully carried on now in Canada, though doubtless not as extensively as it might be, with advantage. As compared with the beet sugar industry, only a small amount of capital requires to be invested.

City Street Building.

Many of the leading New York horsemen are making strong protestations against the laying of asphalt pavements upon the streets principally used by carriage, saddle, and other pleasure horses. Fifth Avenue, which leads to Washington Park, is to be asphalted from 43rd to 59th streets, and, perhaps, clear to the Park. It is because of the location and use of this avenue that strong protests are being made. The objections are based on the ground that asphalt is extremely dangerous to both horse and driver. Mr. F. C. Stevens, President of the West End National Bank of Washington, and proprietor of a large stock farm at Attica, N. Y., who is one of the largest importers and breeders of Hackneys, has made a close study of the asphalt subject in Washington, and has come to the conclusion that on an average horses last less than one year on it before becoming lame. Col. Lawrence Kip, President of the Coney Island Jockey Club and Vice-President of the National Horse Show Association, claims that valuable horses cannot be risked on asphalt pavement, as the danger of slipping and straining themselves, if they do not fall and break their hips and limbs, is altogether too great. The objection to asphalt on the part of truckmen is a matter of notoriety, for their horses cannot get a foothold for hauling on asphalt, even when the pavement is at its best. No doubt the character of the objection will have sufficient weight—at least, in some instances—to cause other sorts of streets to be laid. The one great redeeming feature of the smooth, hard, easily-cleaned pavement is the advantage to public health, which is certainly a grave consideration in a large city; but whether or not a properly-laid Macadam road would not answer the purpose admirably, especially upon resident streets, is a question worthy of consideration. In the City of London, Ont., at the present time, we notice that streets are being put into excellent condition by first lowering the bed a few inches, then putting down layers of coarse gravel and broken stone to the depth of six and four inches respectively, and finishing the surface with coarse sand or screenings. Frequent use of a heavy steam roller makes it very solid and enduring, and quite smooth, but without the slippiness of asphalt. When finished, the bed is about eight inches deep. If our leading country roads could be constructed in a like manner, the

question of roadmaking would, for a considerable time, be solved, though timely repairs would yet be needed.

The cost of asphalt paving, where the traffic is extremely heavy, would be about \$2.65 per square yard, or, on residential streets, \$2.25, while streets paved with broken stone, etc., as above described, has cost the city probably 30 cents per square yard. On country roads it could be done for very much less. In London the stones were broken in winter by men who applied to the city for relief. In many of the States, particularly south, convicts are set to work breaking stones, and then by the use of grading machines and heavy rollers main roads are put in magnificent condition. In other places machines are used for crushing the cobblestones, though, where practicable, stone-breaking would seem a wholesome employment for prisoners, and an effective item in the programme of road improvement.

Protect the Birds.

It is a deplorable fact that as year after year passes, the birds, especially the desirable kinds, are becoming more and more scarce. The American people, who are noted for being prompt to take action when the time seems ripe, early observed Arbor Day in the public schools, and are now seeking to apply the same principle for the protection and increase of the feathered tribes. It is recognized that the greatest benefit of Arbor Day is the sentiment and interest aroused on the subjects of forestry and floriculture and in the broader study of nature. It is believed that the observance of Bird Day would appeal to the youth even more strongly.

The movement has already been tried in a few American cities and proved a decided success. The Department of Agriculture, under whose jurisdiction the movement is promoted, has received inquiries concerning Bird Day from a few of the States, and the matter is attracting attention in others.

Object of Bird Day.—From all sides come reports of a decrease in native birds, due to the clearing of the forests, draining of the swamps, and cultivation of land; but especially to the increasing slaughter of birds for game, the demand for feathers to supply the millinery trade, and the breaking up of nests to gratify the egg-collecting proclivities of small boys. While game laws and statutes protecting insectivorous birds have been passed in many States, these cannot be expected to accomplish much unless supported by popular sentiment in favor of bird protection. This object can only be attained by demonstrating to the people the value of birds, which can be most effectively accomplished by instilling into the minds of the young citizens the proper regard for birds. The object, then, of Bird Day is to diffuse knowledge concerning the native birds and their habits, beginning with those in the school neighborhood, and to arouse a more general interest in bird protection.

The value of setting apart at least one school day in the year for the study of birds and their protection need hardly be commented upon, it is so evident. Is it not worth while to do something to protect the birds and prevent their destruction before it is too late? A powerful influence for good can be exerted by the schools if the teachers will interest themselves in such a movement, and the benefit that will result to the pupils can hardly be attained in any other way at so small an expenditure of time. It is believed and recommended by the American Secretary of Agriculture, that Bird Day can be adopted with profit by schools of all grades, and the subject is recommended to the thoughtful attention of teachers and school superintendents or inspectors throughout the country, in the hope that they will co-operate with other agencies now at work to prevent the destruction of native birds. Such an action is surely much needed in Canada, and we would heartily recommend it.

Plant-Lice in Oats.

The little pale green plant-lice (*Aphides*) seem to have little choice in their diet, as they are from time to time found infesting all sorts of crops. Last year great numbers were noticed upon the fall wheat about the time the heads were filling, but they did little apparent damage. Just now we notice several fields of oats in Middlesex Co., Ont., badly infested. They literally cover some of the heads, and are doing considerable damage. They seem to cluster upon the fine, hairlike threads supporting the grains, which are falling off in great quantities. They seem to have discovered where the most concentrated sap is to be found, viz., just before it enters the grain. So destructive threatens the attack in one field, its owner will likely cut it green for fodder in order to save further loss by the pest. The "ladybug" (*Coccinella*) or "ladybird," as sometimes called, is their great enemy, and will likely prevent an increase of the lice.