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FARMER'S ADVOCATE

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EDITORIAL

An Important Report

The report of the operating assistant to the railway commission on the conditions of the stockyards and the facilities generally for handling and shipping live stock, is published in another part of this issue. Mr. Dillinger was commissioned last March by the railway board to make a thorough investigation into all the charges made by live stock shippers against the various railways and to look into the whole question of live stock transportation in Western Canada. He has lost no time in dealing with the subject, and we are informed that the railways in some instances have already carried out his recommendations, especially with regard to the improvement of yarding accommodation at shipping points, and that other suggested improvements in the service will be undertaken as quickly as it is possible to carry them out.

Want Higher Quality Wheat

The grain dealers of the United States say that something should be done to improve the quality of American wheat. They say it is becoming less valuable for milling, that the flour from a given quantity of the wheat grown in 1909 makes fewer loaves of bread than were made from a similar quantity of wheat grown in 1889, and that the product of two decades ago made less bread per bushel than the wheat grown when the farmers began first to tickle the surface of the western prairies and garner in the grain.

It is proposed, therefore, by the grain dealers to form a kind of international board of trade to encourage better tillage of the soil and educate farmers to the use of fertilizers that will properly balance the plant food elements in the soil. Exactly how the work of education is to

be carried on has not yet been disclosed. Probably as good a way as any to encourage the growing of better quality wheat in this country would be to pay for the grain on the basis of its milling value. So long as a man can sell wheat with an 8 or 10 per cent. gluten content for the same price as wheat running 12 or 14 per cent. he will not readily see the necessity of trying very hard to improve the quality of his product. At the same time there is something in the argument that it pays to farm better and use more fertilizer in the soil than we do, purely as a business proposition under existing conditions.

Find the Profitable Lines and Develop them

Two years ago a farmer in Manitoba began keeping farm accounts. He made an estimate of the capital invested in each department of his farm, kept track of the receipts and expenditures and the cost of the labor devoted to each branch of his business. When he balanced up at the end of the year and estimated the value of his stock on hand, it was found that more profit had been made on poultry than on any line of farming in which he was engaged. The bookkeeping opened his eyes to some facts in connection with his business that he never knew before. Last year he enlarged his poultry department and intends to keep on increasing in the poultry business until that branch has reached the maximum in profitable production.

This is a practical example of the value of farm bookkeeping. Every farmer would not find poultry the most profitable branch of his business, but everyone by keeping a proper set of books would find out what was paying him and what was not. That is the largest reason for keeping accounts anyway: to find out what pays and what does not. Think the matter over. Why wouldn't it pay every farmer to start a set of farm books about the first of the new year?

Sell Finished Hogs

In this issue some important matter is published on finishing bacon hogs, contributed by practical men. One of the criticisms offered by Winnipeg buyers on the hogs offering in this market is that they are not properly finished, and on account of lack of condition in a large proportion of the hogs received the average price is lower than it otherwise would be. The hogs have been sold by the feeder before they were "finished," or they were kept in the feed lot after the proper size and finish had been reached. Neither of these practices pay. It is rarely profitable to sell live stock of any kind out of condition and it seldom pays to hold it after marketable condition has been reached, not unless values promise to make remarkable advances.

Reliable Tests a Great Aid

Nothing can be of more telling value than reliable tests of practical operations. In agriculture, results of actual tests have always been a factor in bringing about much needed changes in system or practice. Tests of varieties of common farm crops have shown conclusively that it is well to change varieties; tests of methods of cultivation or of the order of cropping have proven that one system or one rotation under conditions that exist year after year have much to do with increasing the annual yields; tests of cows in the dairy herd have revealed the fact that some cows give large returns with handsome profits while others do not give enough milk in a year to pay for their keep.

To the average farmer with much work to do and little help, attention to details seems out of the question. Perhaps he realizes that it would pay to perform actual tests. But a start is not made. Now when the rush is about over is a good time to undertake some special work that will give definite data regarding the profits from some particular line of farming. It may be cow-testing for milk production, it may be egg returns from a flock of hens, or it may be food consumed and gain in weights made by hogs or steers. Whatever it is there is no doubt about the opportunity for securing something that will be of great value in future operations on the farm.

Agricultural Education

Once more the interest of Western agriculturists in education that is destined to equip them for making greater profits out of and taking more pleasure in their life work, is demonstrated by an increased attendance at Manitoba Agricultural College. Those who, a few years ago, claimed that the West did not need such an institution must now admit they misinterpreted the feeling of prairie farmers and the signs of the times. It is most gratifying to all interested in rural advancement to find increased attendance at the farmers' college each year. Nothing gives more glowing augury for future development.

Crop returns and business activity show clearly that prosperity depends on the crops harvested. Anything that helps the farmer to master details of soils or crops so that he can increase the annual returns means prosperity in greater measure. When the farmer is satisfied all others are happier in their work. Poor crops naturally put a brake on general business. The training at the agricultural college cannot guarantee big yields, even to the diligent and thoughtful student, but it at least calls attention to particulars of system or practice that ensures greater success in some line. In short the nation is benefited.

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