

# The Farmer's Advocate

"Persevere and Succeed."

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### EDITORIAL.

Lo, the poor orchard! Still in sod, still unsprayed, still unpruned or outrageously mispruned, still insufficiently fertilized—what chance does it get? Even so, it is often more profitable than its owner thinks, but with proper care it would yield astonishing returns.

An apparently successful experiment in recruiting slum-boys for a State farm, and regenerating them by judicious handling, has been carried out by Victoria, according to our Australian correspondent, who states a few very interesting particulars in his regular letter. Any success in this direction is very encouraging.

Vexed with the competition of farm products from abroad, and handicapped for want of plenty of efficient help, the English farmer strenuously complains that Canada will be satisfied with no immigrants but the very ones he wants to keep. To be eligible for an agricultural welcome in Canada, the Old Countryman should be a healthy graduate of the farm. Wanted neither at home nor abroad, it would seem that the "great unfit" of the towns will ultimately be driven to take a training course on the soil.

The gospel of forestry needs preaching now in the wooded country of the Northland. Not only are many rocky, worthless areas stripped of timber that should be left under woods, but almost every town in New Ontario is as innocent of trees as though it were a brand-new town in the midst of a prairie. Indeed, the prairie towns are often located along tree-lined streams, and are, therefore, to some extent embowered, while the Northland towns are generally bald, bare and ugly in their nakedness. A city without trees is a city of shops and residences, but not of homes in the best sense. Perhaps the trees left from the forest would not survive exposure, but if so, some park-like areas should be left intact, and hardy trees and shrubs should be planted. The new town of Cochrane, at the junction of the T. & N. O. R. with the National Transcontinental, has done this, and posterity will thank a prudent group of pioneers for a beautiful environment.

The new Conservation Commission of Canada has started out well, in one particular, at least. From Secretary James White, of Ottawa, we have already a bound copy covering in complete form the proceedings of the first annual meeting, held in January of this year. Anyone interested in the preservation and rational development of the natural resources of the country will prize having in his possession copies of the addresses of Dr. B. E. Fernow, Dr. James W. Robertson, Dr. Eugene Haanel, Hon. Frank Cochrane; P. H. Bryce, M.D.; Kelly Evans; F. T. Congdon, M. P.; H. T. Gussow; Hon. Adam Beck; Dr. C. G. Hewitt, the new Dominion Entomologist, and Chas. R. Coulter, C. E. Dr. Hewitt's address on insects destructive to Canadian forests is admirable, and a more cogent and effective statement of the electricity question than that made by Hon. Adam Beck, we have yet to read. Ten thousand copies of the report in English, and 2,500 in French, were ordered to be printed, and, we presume, are obtainable by application to the secretary, Mr. White.

### The Place of Commercial Fertilizers.

The advisability of using commercial fertilizers is one of the questions that excites interest at the present time, in all gatherings of farmers. Some would have us believe that even where a large stock is kept, and nothing is sold except animals or their products, the farms must be getting poorer. Impoverishment, say they, may be slower than when grain or other natural products of the farm are marketed, but it is going on, nevertheless. In practice it does not work out thus. Where a full stock of animals is kept, and a good rotation practiced, in which clover has a place, and in which the land is in sod about half the time, the soil actually increases in productiveness. The supply of available fertility increases. Those who farm after that fashion have no serious need for special fertilizers, although it is quite possible that a supply of phosphates and potash might be advantageous in some cases, and under extraordinary conditions, where excessive precipitation washes the nitrates out of the soil in winter, light applications of complete fertilizers are sometimes resorted to to forward early spring growth. These conditions do not obtain, however, in most parts of Old Ontario or Quebec.

Conditions are different, however, where fruit farming is engaged in, or where crops for the canneries are grown, or, as in the Northwest, where almost the total crop of grain is sold year after year. In all such cases there is a serious removal of the elements of which plants are composed, which, if not replaced to some extent, must result, and does result, in decreased fertility. The bean-growers of Kent Co., Ont., are feeling this. Beans have been grown in that district for thirty years, and profitable crops are still produced, though no artificial manures have ever been used. But the average yield is becoming less, and farmers are somewhat anxiously inquiring about the worth of special fertilizers. Their rotation is simple and admirable—beans, fall wheat, and clover—but the amount of grain sold off the farms yearly in the shape of beans and wheat, makes it a matter of wonder that soil exhaustion has not been much more serious. The fact that beans are a leguminous crop, taking nitrogen from the atmosphere, must be the chief explanation. At the bean-experiment station which has been established, these experiments with fertilizers are to be a prominent feature.

It is to the credit of Canadian farms and farming that the output of produce has been increasing, while barnyard manure has been the sole source of fertilizer supply, but with the development of special lines of crop production, such as have been mentioned, a greatly increased use of commercial fertilizers may be expected. These, while much inferior to barnyard manure, in that they supply no humus, are not merely stimulants, but contain the elements of plant nutrition, are actually foods for plants.

The experience of Japan, where land is limited, and population dense, shows the tendency of the age. In the last 30 years, according to a late Trade and Commerce report, the rice crop of Japan has increased by over 100 per cent., while the land under cultivation for rice has only increased 16 per cent. The barley crop has increased over 100 per cent., while the land under cultivation for barley only 30 per cent. These increases can only be accounted for, says Trade Commissioner G. A. Harris, Yokohama, by the use of fertilizers employed, and the more modern methods of farming. The value of fertilizers used in Japan increased from \$12,400,000, in 1902, to over \$29,000,000 in 1908.

### Experience vs. "Book-farming."

A milkman walked into our office the other day, and in twenty minutes delivered himself of more nonsense about dairying and cow-keeping than we ever heard from any man before in a year's acquaintance. He began by stating that milk from his old natural pasture was worth 20 per cent. more than milk made by cows grazing on the best clover and timothy. Silage nor mangels should be fed to dairy cows, but turnips were just the thing; they gave the milk flavor and "body." Silage was blamed for unthriftiness, indigestion, tuberculosis and contagious abortion. Our friend had used a silo, but discarded it. On inquiry, it developed that his method of making silage was to cut and shock the corn, then, in a month's time, put it into the silo. The idea was to reduce the percentage of acid, which he probably accomplished all right enough, but at the expense of other changes more serious. Corn meal was the ideal grain for milk production, but, he asserted, no cow should be given over a quart a day. Alfalfa, he admitted, was a good thing, if one could get the cows to eat it, but his wouldn't. It turned out that he let the stuff go till in full bloom, at which stage, of course, it makes rather woody and not very palatable hay. In the breeding of cows, his idea was to cross his Jersey grades with Ayrshires, then their progeny with Holsteins, and possibly Shorthorn on top of that—an ideal way to breed "thoroughbred mongrels." This, and a great deal more heresy, he unloaded, with the assurance of one who had, as he said, "learned it all by practical experience," while the members of our staff who chanced to be present, listened with amusement. Presently we ventured to inform him that we had all fed silage, and our experience, as well as our methods, had been different from his. We filled the silo within reasonable time after cutting the corn. Likewise with alfalfa, which, if cut when a tenth in bloom, makes the richest and most palatable hay we have. As for affecting the richness of milk by feed, exhaustive experiments had proved that it could not be done permanently, except to a very slight extent. The feed will affect the color, though, and that is what he judged richness by. He had never tested a bottle. Of course, silage has nothing to do with causing either tuberculosis or contagious abortion, which are germ diseases. To our great surprise, he began to give in, apparently convinced that we must have known what we were talking about, and that his own imperfectly-interpreted experience was not, after all, the arbiter of truth and dairy knowledge.

It was a splendid example of how misleading a limited personal experience may be. One can go out into the country and prove (?) almost any absurd nonsense with the APPARENT results of somebody's experience. The fact is, very few people are qualified to draw general conclusions from experience, especially from a limited experience. Unseen factors bias results, and make them seem to indicate what they really do not indicate at all. It is the careful, systematic and scientific deduction by a trained mind working on a large accumulation of representative experience, that we should seek to acquaint ourselves with. That is the kind of broad, thorough knowledge we get in good books, bulletins and the agricultural press. To be sure, there are poor books, superficial bulletins, and untrustworthy papers. We should select our reading, choosing only the best. But the right kind of reading will broaden our outlook, deepen and strengthen our understanding, stimulate our minds, and quicken our wills to action. Of that kind of "book-farming" we need a great deal more.