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EDITORIAL.

THE VALUE OF ENSILAGE.

Those who have a supply of corn ensilage to feed to their stock this winter will have a higher appreciation than ever of its value. The partial failure last year of both the hay and oat crops, on which most dependence is placed by the majority of farmers, has served to emphasize the importance and the wisdom of providing against such a contingency, which may recur in any year. The prospect for an average hay crop the coming season is by no means bright, owing to the failure of the clover catch in many districts last spring and the close cropping of the meadows in the late fall, stock having been left out longer than usual on account of the light supply of fodder in the barns. And, though the blight, which so heavily discounted the oat crop, may have been and probably was owing to weather conditions which may not recur this year, yet this point has not been satisfactorily settled, the best authorities being far from certain as to the cause, it is quite possible we may have a repetition of the shortage in that valuable standard crop, which has been relied upon as one of the surest and safest of the cereals. Under these circumstances, it would seem to be the part of wisdom to make provision for a more diversified supply of winter feed, and we know of no other crop so safe and suitable, wherever it can be sufficiently matured, as corn for grain or for silage. There are few crops that are surer or safer, in the average of years, and especially in a season of drouth, since it revels in a hot temperature, and will flourish when grass and grain crops wilt and wither. It produces a heavier and bulkier yield of palatable and nutritious food than any other crop, and can usually be stored in better condition than other farm crops, since rain has no injurious effect upon it, and even frost has lost its terror to the mind of the man who has had experience with ensilage, frost, in many instances, seeming often to improve rather than injure its keeping qualities and its feeding value, as about the only danger with ensilage lies in storing it in too green a condition. The culture of the corn crop, if well managed, need not be costly, and its harvesting comes after the grain is secured and threshing and the fall seeding are well over. And when the silo is filled, the farmer has a bank from which he can comfortably draw supplies in any kind of weather, and of a quality which is wholesome, and suitable for either milk or beef production, at a moderate cost, as compared with any other food. And if one has more in store than is needed for winter feeding, it will keep indefinitely, and may prove a boon in supplementing the food supply in a time of drouth in summer, when, without some such provision, the milk supply is sure to shrink, and the financial returns be seriously shortened.

While the richest soil and the best preparation is none too good for a corn crop, and, on heavy land, a fall-plowed field, top-dressed with manure in winter, is, as a rule, preferable, a good crop may be secured, especially on the loamier soils, with spring plowing and manuring, or by plowing a sod field in spring and giving thorough surface tillage, which need not be undertaken until the grain seeding is finished, so that the corn crop does not seriously interfere, in any stage of its handling, with the other farm crops, and, in this respect peculiarly commends itself to the consideration of every farmer so situated that he can adopt its cultivation with a reasonable prospect of success. The question of securing sound seed of a suitable variety for the section should receive early attention, and testing the seed for

vitality, which is so easily done, is a wise provision. And the building of a silo, if one is not already provided, need not be costly, as a satisfactory stave silo of medium capacity, which will last for many years, may be erected for less than one hundred dollars, while a cement-concrete silo which will last indefinitely may be built for less than twice as much. The work of preparing for either may be commenced this winter, while sleighing is good and farm work slack, as gravel or lumber, either of which will keep, may be secured now, or may be had where wanted after the corn crop is assured. Much information as to the building of silos has appeared in "The Farmer's Advocate" in the last year, and more may be looked for in the coming months, and we counsel our readers to keep an ear to the ground, as we are assured that corn-growing and silo-building will bulk more largely in the plans of farmers this year than has ever been the case in the past.

MANITOBA FEEDING OF RANGE-BRED CATTLE.

Before long Manitoba farmers will be buying cattle from the ranches, winter-feeding, and selling them in June. If some stall-feeding were done on the wheat plains, and the cattle shipped early in the summer onto a good market, there would be a third to a half more made out of the cattle. Nature has given the prairie farmer any amount of feed. This spring, enough straw will be burned in the West to have fed three-quarters of a million cattle. The human being takes as long as he can the line of least resistance, but the Province of Manitoba is ripe and ready for a change. The question is, Can they stall-feed at a profit? Might not the Dominion Government take hold of 300 or 400 head of well-bred cattle, feed them as an experiment, charge everything up, make two, three or four shipments to Liverpool and Glasgow, and publish the results? These thoughts were thrown out by Duncan Anderson at the National Live-stock Convention, in his splendid survey of the conditions and needs of the stock-raising industry in the various Provinces.

Following Mr. Anderson, Dr. Rutherford again took occasion to deplore the tendency, on the part of Westerners, to neglect everything else for grain-raising. Moderate progress along agricultural lines would eventually prove of much greater benefit to that country than bumper crops of wheat. Exclusive grain-raising inevitably depletes the soil. On the famous Portage Plains, 18 bushels of wheat per acre is a good crop, yet, in some of the old countries of the world 32 to 40 bushels are secured. As for experimental feeding of range-bred cattle, he had corresponded considerably with Mr. G. H. Greig, of Winnipeg, and they decided that, to a few men who would undertake to feed these, the Government would, by way of experiment, offer, as a special inducement, to give a bonus of 2 cents per pound of gain, in addition to whatever the feeders might make out of the enterprise. But no, they preferred to curl. The waste of feed going on up there is a tempting of Providence.

Andrew Graham, of Pomeroy, Man., said that around Carman they were going in for rotation and mixed farming. Manure spreaders were being used, and very little summer-fallowing done. Clover was succeeding well with them. Two years ago he seeded 60 acres of clover, and last year 80 acres. He has now a three-year-old stand of clover in fine condition. Mr. Anderson remarked that in the West one value of manuring was that on stubble land it hastened maturity five to eight days, and in some cases would have been the salvation of the crop last fall. A dissenting voice was raised by John Graham, of Carberry, who

argued that cattle-feeding in Manitoba would never pay; the labor of feeding was too much, and was awkward in April and May. The cattle-feeding business had been tried in Manitoba time and again, but he never yet knew a man to stay at it and make money out of it. He would like to see the embargo lifted and the British market opened to Western stockers.

G. H. Greig emphatically contended that cattle could be fed profitably in Manitoba, and told of one man he knew well who went into Northern Manitoba some years ago and started to feed cattle in the old Ontario way, tying the steers in stalls in a basement barn, "evidently modelled after the one he had left in Ontario, as it had only one window." For several years he fed 50 to 100 head, but finally determined to change his method. He bought some hay-fed, semi-domestic cattle, turned them out on some rolling scrub land, with a spring-water ravine on the north side. He fed them outdoors on grain-straw and chop, and finds the method perfectly satisfactory. One objection is that the season is long, as he has to hold his cattle over till the frozen meat is out of the way. In 1906 he fed 90 head, bought in at an average of 1,250 pounds, price \$3.25 per cwt., making the cattle cost \$40.60 per head. They were fed on a light meal ration at first, of about 4 pounds, increased to 10 or 12 pounds towards the close of the season. During the fore part of the season the ration consisted of about half bran. Allowing interest, the wages of 1½ men drawing straw, etc., and allowing each steer 1,700 pounds chop, at 80 cents per cwt., equal to \$13.60 per head, his steers cost him to buy and feed \$57.60. These he sold at an average weight of 1,400 pounds, at \$5.25 per cwt., making proceeds \$73.50, which left a profit of about \$16 per head.

Mr. John Graham objected that this estimate was of an exceptional case, where there was scrub shelter, spring water, and a favorable season. Others testified, however, that they had fed cattle and made money out of them, taking one year with another, and that there was no better country than Manitoba for cattle-feeding. One trouble was that there was not enough cattle out there to make it a profitable field for buyers.

H. C. McMullen, Live-stock Agent of the C. P. R., at Calgary, Alta., referred to a couple of men who had fed cattle for Pat Burns at a given price for May delivery. He happened to be with Mr. Burns when these cattle were being inspected in the spring. On the one place there were 62 steers, sleek, fat and smooth, and when they were killed they weighed out well. Within half-an-hour's ride was another farm, with 68 steers fed on the same terms, but rakey and poor. The owner asserted that they had had plenty of good hay and plenty of grain. Enquiry revealed, however, that they had been watered in a couple of half-barrels with about a foot of ice in them, and a capacity of about two pails of water apiece. There is an inference to be drawn, he significantly added.

Wm. English reported that, in his district, in Manitoba, dozens of carloads of good cattle are fed. He mentioned a lot of two-year-old steers which averaged 1,300 pounds. In reply to a question, Mr. English rather nonplussed his interrogator, Dr. Rutherford, by attributing the development of the cattle industry in that district to the fact that it had been settled by Ontario farmers. Afterwards he added that until recently they had been a long distance from a railroad, and were therefore induced to market more of their grain on foot. Subsequently, the Convention placed itself on record as favoring the plan suggested by the Live-stock Commissioner for the experimental feeding of cattle in Western Canada.