

# The Farmer's Advocate

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### EDITORIAL

Men learn wisdom through folly. He is a wise student who learns from the folly of others, and not always from his own.

Lean kine mean thin pocketbooks. It is the extra feed that tells. See that the cows' paunches are well padded out twice a day with nutritious feed.

Volunteer enlistment has been tried, and failed, in Britain, we are told. This is about the most hopeful statement issued from the Tress conference. It indicates, let us hope, that the Englishman is becoming too civilized to participate, except under stress of dire emergency, in the pagan game of war.

We never hoe a thistle from a hill of corn. We go through at the last cultivation with a pair of leather gloves and pull them out, remarked a thrifty Oxford County farmer the other day. Thistles cut off with the hoe grow up again. Those pulled out will not show above the surface till fall, at any rate.

A New Brunswick subscriber, in the course of a very interesting letter, submitting a year's dairy-herd record, in referring to the fact that the few silos built in their district have all gone out of use, puts the question, "Is it a case of the survival of the fittest, or a warp in the gumption of our farmers?" We are not prepared to say. The great ensilage crop is corn, and corn is not as sure a crop in New Brunswick as farther west. Still, we know that in King's County, New Brunswick, a few dairymen have, until recently, at all events, used silos with considerable satisfaction, and we are not fully convinced but that many others might do so by growing early varieties on well-manured, well-cultivated, fall-plowed sod, not being in any hurry to get it into the silo, but taking chance of a frost, rather than ensiling in immature condition. And if corn cannot be successfully grown in certain districts, the question is open to earnest consideration whether it would not pay to ensile clover or alfalfa, either of which, if cut at the right stage and packed into a tight silo, will cure into an appetizing, succulent winter feed.

Much, but not too much, is being said in favor of tile-draining the fields. Let us not forget that the roads are equally benefited by the subsoil watercourses which tile afford. Wherever properly put in on wet roads, tile have effected a marvellous improvement. Scoffers may laugh, and declare that you can't drain puddled clay, but their opinions are based on a misconception. In the first place, it is not the puddled clay we try to drain, but the earth beneath the puddled surface. Secondly, a road-drain ditch may and should be filled nearly to the surface with gravel, stone, or other loose foreign material. In the third place, even the hardest, waxiest clay will soon yield to the ameliorating influence of under-drainage. The Ontario County of Middlesex is laying a considerable mileage of tile drains on its roads, and various other municipalities have tried it to a greater or less extent. Tile drainage is the first and most important step to take in the further development of our public highways. Gravelling can wait. Drain the foundation. Metal surfacing has to be replaced every little while. Drainage is permanent, and its benefits become more marked with passing years.

### Agricultural Training of Teachers.

The primary purpose of the agricultural college is to train young men who intend to farm, and also those others who wish to fit themselves to serve the industry in some expert or professional capacity. A very important secondary function is the training of rural-school teachers in elementary agriculture and horticulture, that they may relate the farm boys' and girls' education to their environment, and educate them towards, not from the land. A class of one hundred and thirty-two Normal-trained teachers have just completed a special ten-weeks' course at the Ontario Agricultural College, ninety-two having received instruction in elementary agriculture and horticulture, the remainder in industrial arts. It is the former section of the class, tutored by Prof. S. B. McCready, B. A., who look forward to teaching in rural schools. A similar line of work is being carried on at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, in Truro, N. S., where a rural-science school is being held this month, especially for teachers, though others may attend. Last year there was a small but interested class of thirty. This year, Principal Cumming informed us that formal application had been received from one hundred and twenty-four before the end of June. In Quebec, the Macdonald College has a special department for the training of rural-school children. And so the effort is to take the influence and inspiration of the agricultural college through the teacher to the child.

### The Silo and the Corn Crib.

On many farms, when the silo comes in, the corn crib goes out. Drilling in seed at the rate of half a bushel per acre, takes the place of hill planting in check rows. With early corn, grown in hills or drills, rigidly thinned, and properly cultivated, well-earred stalks will enrich the silo content. Ideal silage is supposed to combine the high nutritive value with succulence. But we are not so sure that we can afford, without losing more than variety in diet, to discard roots and corn in the ear. Once a man gets the silo habit, he does seem to grow averse to dry-curing fodder, and husking corn, and caring for both. The labor problem worries him, and after the grain harvest he appears to become busier than before; so the surplus corn remaining after the silo is filled is slashed down, shocked up, and all fed to the cattle unhusked. But then, after all, for feeding hogs, horses, cattle and poultry, what better adjunct have we than a long, airy crib, packed with well-hardened ears of corn? It has made savings-bank deposits grow, and helped to pay for countless farms. Canadian farmers who throw a few ears of corn in the feed box, with about half or two-thirds the usual quantity of oats, generally have sleek-looking horses, that stand a heavy day's work without flinching. And there is reason for it. The Ohio Experiment Station made a comparative study of the value of oats and corn for work horses, and the conclusions of the investigation, given elsewhere, are worth study, and suggest the question, Is it not worth while to continue or revive the corn crib in silo districts? What say our readers: (1) What has been their experience in feeding corn to horses? (2) What is to be said about good silage as a horse food? (3) Is it not practicable to utilize the corn crib and the silo on the same farm?

Education for efficiency, as well as for culture, is the motto of the times.

### Cheap Alcohol Not Yet.

The plan of using denatured alcohol from waste products, as a cheap fuel to furnish power on the farm—one of the objects of the United States law permitting its manufacture—is pronounced a failure by the chemists of the American Department of Agriculture, after experiments covering almost a year. Prof. Harris L. Sawyer, Chief of the Bureau of Chemistry, says it is impossible, because of the fuel cost to operate the still, to say nothing about the original cost of the plant, which is approximately \$10,000 for a still to do good work.

"Mountaineers make moonshine whiskey in small stills, and realize a good profit, until they get caught," says the Chief of the Bureau; "but, while moonshine whiskey, which costs 50 cents a gallon to manufacture, is cheap for whiskey, alcohol at 50 cents a gallon would never compete with gasoline. So far, in a good-sized still, it has been impossible to produce alcohol at as low a price as gasoline is produced."

The Department of Agriculture secured an appropriation of \$10,000 to demonstrate the process of manufacture. A first-class still, of small capacity, was placed in the Government exhibit at the National Corn Exposition, held in Omaha last December. It proved a good attraction, and was seen by some hundred thousand farmers, but with the raw material almost free, and little or no fuel outlay, the lowest cost at which the alcohol could be produced was about 17 cents a gallon, and a gallon of alcohol will produce scarcely more power than a gallon of kerosene. The travelling still is now in Washington. A similar still is being used in the attempt to make alcohol from cactus in Texas, while another is working in Mississippi trying to make alcohol from sawdust.

As a commercial product, denatured alcohol may some day compete with gasoline, but, as for the dream of each farmer having a small still, and making from cornstalks, straw, waste apples and other refuse, cheap fuel with which to thresh, shell corn, grind feed, churn, and light his farm, that day is not in sight. It is now stated in the American press that, if farmers ever get the benefit of denatured alcohol, it will be by organizing co-operative companies in regions where coal can be secured at low cost.

Thus another vision fades, though not altogether unexpectedly, we must say. "The Farmer's Advocate," while hopeful of benefit from tax-free alcohol, never shared the sanguine anticipations of its contemporaries. It is easy to build up false hopes, and just as rude to have them swept suddenly away. Impartial facts are what the public want, and what legislators and editors should seek to put forth. With a view to getting at the facts regarding the possibilities of alcohol for fuel, we requested Professor Harcourt, while in Germany last summer, to inquire into the manufacture of denatured alcohol there. In "The Farmer's Advocate" of December 17th, page 1954, he published the result of his observations in Germany, where he found the retail price of the article 28 to 30 cents a gallon (ninety-five per cent. volume). His conclusions then were that, if alcohol were to be profitably manufactured by our farmers, it would have to be by co-operative effort, as a high-proof article could be made only by a continuous still, expensive to purchase and requiring expert attention. Developments indicate that his view was not unduly conservative.