

The Farmer's Advocate AND HOME MAGAZINE.

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IN THE DOMINION.

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Something More Than Dollars.

In emphasizing one point there is always the danger of appearing to discount others. Addressing the Ontario Corn Growers' Convention this month, Prof. R. A. Moore, of Wisconsin, argued strongly in favor of more ample cash returns as an effectual means of keeping boys on the farm. This is all very well for, as Hon. Mr. Duff remarked, when a farmer isn't making a little money he gets discontented, as why shouldn't he? But to disparage sentiment utterly, and hold up profit as the sole magnet of attraction in country life, is to create a wrong impression and instill a false ideal. The opportunity to grow seed corn at three dollars a bushel may appeal to the Wisconsin farmer's son as a better job than running a street car, but the better class of farm boys will not be held in the country even by the prospect of growing three-dollar corn, unless there are some other motives conjoined with this. The fact may as well be faced squarely that a bright, wide-awake boy, with keen business ability, can make more money in the city than he can ever hope to make in the country, and if money were the only thing worth living for we might as well cease trying to keep the bright boys on the farm. But money is not the only thing worth while. Sentiment plays a part, and good living, under natural conditions, is worth far more than a few extra hundred thousand dollars to will to one's heirs. Money is not the only thing Prof. Moore lives for, else a man of his calibre would not be drawing a professor's salary of two or three thousand a year. We are very sure that he will agree with this paragraph, and that he would be one of the last men to advocate sordid ideals. He is quite right in urging the opportunities for enhanced profits that come from the practice of an enterprising line of agriculture, but we think he would do well, at the same time, to avoid laying quite so much stress upon mere money getting. We all like profit, and the accumulation of a reasonable competence is praiseworthy, but there are better things about farming than the dollars that are in it. The man who lives for money lives in vain.

Nature's Diary.

By A. B. Klugh, M. A.

CROWS.

A common winter bird in Southern Ontario is the crow. In Central, Northern and Eastern Ontario it is one of the earliest birds to arrive in the spring.

In winter the total crow population of a locality resort to a single "roost" for the night. Sometimes immense numbers of crows congregate in such "roosts," which, as a rule, consist of a dense pine grove. One "roost" at Haines Port, New Jersey, covered 20 to 30 acres, and contained from 200,000 to 300,000 crows. Another, Davis Grove, Pennsylvania, covered about twenty acres, and was resorted to by about 200,000 birds.

About an hour before sunset stragglers begin to appear near the "roost," and in the course of half an hour the flocks begin to arrive in lines and detachments from all quarters. They usually descend to some spot about a quarter to half a mile from the "roost." More and more crows arrive, and they all keep up a terrific clamor. At sunset they all rise and fly to the "roost," taking up their positions in the trees.

At dawn the crows keep up a tremendous "cawing" for about an hour, a few then leave but soon resume their perches, until just before sunrise they fly away to all points of the compass in detachments.

The crow is a great conversationalist, and a little of his "language" can be understood by those who have studied him at all closely. The crow is conventionally supposed to say "caw," but to my ears at least it very rarely does, and "rawr" sounds much nearer the mark. We can distinguish the slow "rawr-rawr," which, when uttered means "Here I am, and everything all right," the quick "kuh-kuh-kuh" which apparently indicates suspicion, and the long-drawn "raw-awr-raw-awr" with a rising inflection on the last syllable, which says "fly for your lives." When, during the hours of broad daylight, we hear a bunch of crows fairly screeching, both in unison and discord, it nearly always means "owl" or "fox." A flock of crows if they discover a great horned owl in the daytime will fly at it, and scream at it, and worry it so that it takes flight. But flight is of no avail, for the crows follow it in a long string and whenever it settles down it is again harassed and "cursed," and so it goes on until the owl manages to escape its tormentors in a thick piece of woods or until darkness intervenes.

The crow is an omnivorous bird, its food being about one-third animal and two-thirds vegetable. Among the animals eaten are the cottontail rabbits (usually young ones), meadow mice, young wild birds of various species, young poultry, young turtles, snakes, frogs, toads, newts, salamanders, crayfish, land snails, clams, and insects (largely beetles and grasshoppers). The other animal food taken is largely carrion.

Of the vegetable food the main constituent is corn, the rest being made up of oats, wheat, cultivated cherries, cultivated strawberries, and such wild fruits as acorns, beechnuts, wild cherries, blackberries, raspberries, berries of poison ivy and sumac, elderberries, junberries, dog-wood berries, etc., etc.

Considering, now, the economic value of the crow, we find that the destruction of the meadow mice, crayfish, and the eating of carrion are a gain. The eating of grasshoppers and some of the beetles also is beneficial, but some of the beetles taken are beneficial predaceous species.

On the other hand the eating of young birds, poultry, snakes, toads, corn, oats, wheat and cultivated fruits are a loss. The main harm being the destruction of sprouting corn, of young poultry, and of the eggs and young of wild birds. Crows show much cleverness in securing young chickens. Sometimes a crow will walk round and round near a hen with a brood, and try to make the hen pursue it for some distance, when the crow will fly quickly back and grab one of the chickens before the hen can return to her brood. Or sometimes two crows approach a brood, and while the hen is pursuing one the other secures a chicken. Many losses from the poultry yard, which, are usually attributed to hawks, are undoubtedly due to crows.

Thus we see that the crow does both good and harm, and my belief is that the harm is in excess of the good, and while I should not care to urge a total extinction of crows, there is no danger in recommending that crows be killed whenever possible, as the crow is well able to look after itself.

Young corn may be protected in three ways,—by hanging dead crows in the field, by tarring the seed corn, and by putting poisoned meat or corn in the field.

Crows are notoriously hard to shoot, but once one has learned how he can always get them. The secret is to learn to "call" like a crow in distress, a low half-choked "rawr-rawr-rawr," then hide under a thick tree, and on uttering this call the crows will come in numbers

and perch in nearby trees, so that often two or three may be obtained at a shot.

The most practical method of protection is tarring the seed. To do this the corn should be placed in a tub, enough warm water poured on to moisten it, and enough tar stirred in to give each kernel a thin coating. Corn thus treated is too sticky to run through a planter, but if any dry powder, such as ashes or finely-ground earth, is stirred in until each kernel is well coated, it will work well in the planter.

The Dairymen's Business Interest.

In this issue of "The Farmer's Advocate" we are honored with two communications from Prof. H. H. Dean, of the Ontario Agricultural College. At least, one is from Prof. Dean; the other, signed A, B, C and D, was produced by him, we understand, in collaboration with W. C. Coo, official reporter of the Western Ontario Dairymen's Convention. The first letter, by way of a reply to an Editorial, entitled "Cows, Prices and Profits," which appeared in "The Farmer's Advocate" of January 30th, 1913, and in which we had questioned the logic of urging organized effort to increase dairy production, as Prof. Dean seemed to have done at the Western Dairymen's Convention, whilst in the next breath assigning unremunerative prices for dairy products as a partial explanation of our declining exports. In the letter now under discussion Prof. Dean states that he was not arguing for a larger number of cows on Ontario farms, but was merely trying to show the importance of refilling the stalls of cull cows being slaughtered. We hope that was all he meant, but such was not the implication of what he said, when, with fine declamatory effect, he asserted that there was in this province (or country) no active organization having for its purpose to bring about an increase in the number and improvement in the quality of our dairy cows. Does that not imply the desirability of organized effort to enlarge production?

Having intimated that we had drawn an unjustified inference from his remarks, our correspondent goes on to argue against effort to bolster prices by combining in order to restrict production—something "The Farmer's Advocate" has always discountenanced, and something not under discussion at all. Combination to restrict production and thereby enhance prices, is no more justifiable than efforts to boost production, thereby tending to slump prices. There is really just one sound point in the letter. That is a warning that when the number of cows in a cheese-factory or creamery district falls below the number where it is profitable to operate the cheese factory or other plant, the factory must close. It is sound business from the individual producer's standpoint to see that the make in his particular district does not fall below the point where his factory can be economically operated; but it is not especially to his interest that the total number of factories in the country should be maintained or increased. Prof. Dean says it is childish to concentrate effort on improving quality and securing maximum individual profit, leaving supply and demand to regulate production and letting statistics take care of themselves. Well, perhaps; but, from our point of view, it looks like good business, and we think the vast majority of Canadian dairymen will agree with us.

As for the second letter, we can only express unqualified admiration of its literary genius. Having first of all exhausted the resources of a Thesaurus dictionary, to the limit of "ambages," the joint authors availed us with a hint of the lawsuit we so narrowly escaped, lamented the alleged submergence of the editor's poetic fancy beneath an uninteresting plane of realism, and then proceeded to unite the dramatic talent of two or more Canadian cities upon a dire plot to malign the reputation of Canadian cheese abroad. As a spell-binder, it would be hard to beat. All we can add that if the play proves as entertaining as the description, we shall instruct our dramatic critic to lay aside utterly any prejudices he may have formed and acclaim the new production deservedly as a master-piece of histrionic art.