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EDITORIAL.

Importance of Good Seed.

The re-introduction of the Pure-seeds Bill by Hon. Sydney Fisher in the House of Commons at Ottawa, and the discussion thereon, will serve to again direct the attention of farmers to the paramount importance of paying more attention to the quality of the seed they sow. The investigations made by the Seeds Division of the Dominion Department of Agriculture into the character of the grain and grass seeds placed upon the market by dealers and others, and the publication of their findings, have proved an eye-opener to farmers, revealing a frightful source of dissemination of foul seeds, and accounting in a large measure for the ever-increasing evil of noxious weeds, entailing not only much extra labor in their destruction, but seriously reducing the yield and quality of farm crops, proving a heavy financial loss in the returns from the land.

The distribution of weed seeds has doubtless been largely through the sale of impure clover and grass seeds, in which case the weed seeds are so nearly similar in size and appearance to the seed ostensibly sold, as to be practically impossible of identification or detection by the naked eye. A chart supplied by the Department of Agriculture shows that in samples found on sale in Ontario, from 6,000 to 15,000 weed seeds were found in a pound of what was being sold as red clover, and that in samples of alsike clover as high as 23,556 weed seeds in one case were found, and in another no fewer than 49,830 seeds of weeds. In the former case the sample having only seventy-two per cent. of pure seed was priced at \$5.25 per bushel, or equal to \$7.29 per bushel for the good red clover seed it contained. While, in the latter case, the sample priced at \$8.00 per bushel, and containing only forty-eight per cent. of good seed, would cost in reality for the alsike \$16.66 per bushel. These are startling figures, and though those quoted may be extreme cases, all will readily agree that if the average sample is one-twentieth as bad in this respect, the condition is truly alarming.

As a result of the publication of the reports of the discussion of this question when Mr. Fisher's bill was before the House last year, seed merchants report already an increasing enquiry by farmers and dealers for first-class seed, and the circumstances certainly justify the introduction of the measure, the provisions of which, it is to be hoped, will be made so clear, workable and imperative that the enactment may have the desired effect of diminishing, to a very marked extent, the percentage of foul seeds sold.

The need of greater care in the selection and cleaning of seed on the part of farmers is more urgent than most of them are aware. Carefully-conducted experiments have proven undeniably that the increase in the yield of grain from plump, sound seed over that of seed of average quality is such as to make it well worth while to exercise special care in thoroughly cleaning the seed. It is claimed that in eleven years, Prof. Zavitz, of the Ontario Agricultural College, has, by selecting the seed, increased the yield of oats from 58 bushels to 77 bushels per acre. If but one-half or one-quarter of that increase can be secured by the average farmer the value of the crops would be immensely augmented. It has been calculated that if by good seed the yield of the crops in Canada could be increased by only one bushel per acre it would mean \$6,000,000 more in the pockets of the farmers of this country annually. The short courses in judging grain and other

seeds, as well as live stock, instituted at the agricultural colleges, and which it is expected will be arranged for at other centers in the near future, should prove helpful in creating a greater interest in the pure-seeds propaganda, and set farmers and farmers' sons to thinking and acting along these lines to their profit. In the meantime, it is important that early provision be made for the selection of good seed for the coming spring season, and extra care given to thorough cleaning, and, in any case of doubt as to the vitality of the seed, to have its germinating qualities tested long before seeding time. A word as to the folly of buying cheap seed, simply because the price is low, and without reference to quality and purity. The cheapest, apparently, as we have shown, may be very dear in the end, and the highest priced, if the quality is right, may be by far the cheapest, just as a low-priced farm paper may be very dear, as compared with an up-to-date, progressive and reliable publication. Quality should count in the estimation of intelligent people.

The British Embargo.

The Scottish Farmer, replying to the address of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, advocating the re-opening of British ports to Canadian cattle, summarizes its objections as follows:

"(1) Apart from the adoption of a general policy of preferential rates for her colonies, Great Britain cannot, with safety to her own fiscal relations with the United States, differentiate Canada from the United States or the Argentine. (2) If she abandons the general position that her ports are closed to store cattle or sheep from all quarters, she is bound to adopt the policy in force before 1896, viz., the ports are closed to all countries in which there is disease, and open to all which show a clean bill of health. Neither the Argentine nor the United States can, looking to the past, give a guarantee of a clean bill with impunity, and it is impossible to prevent the shipping of United States cattle from Canadian ports. Two years ago foot-and-mouth disease was discovered, and proved to have been existent for an indefinite period in the very parts of the United States through which Canadian cattle would be shipped during a considerable part of the year. The gravity of this fact was fully recognized by those responsible for the Canadian Department of Agriculture two years ago, and its bearing on the British policy of 1896 was frankly acknowledged. (3) It is not proved that profits can now be made on Canadian stores, such as were reported in the short period of their unrestricted admission prior to 1892, and it is an unassailable proposition that a consistent public policy on this question is, in the long run, best for all parties."

Since the foregoing came to hand, Hon. Henry Chaplin, M. P., speaking at Oakham, also rebuked Campbell-Bannerman, and indulged in a lot of wild talk about the dangers of British herds being "decimated by disease," and removing the embargo as "ruinous to the cattle-feeders." The sum and substance of the whole matter is this, that it is not disease from Canada that is feared, but the competition of Canadian cattle. There is no disease here, and there never was any basis for the prohibition, which was only brought about by official straining at gnats over alleged pleuro-pneumonia lesions. Canada has open winter ports, and is not obliged to ship through the United States. Canada voluntarily gives British goods a preference, and the reciprocal encouragement she receives is the rigid maintenance of the embargo against her cattle. This is one way of promoting imperial unity throughout the empire. Canadian farmers are not demonstrative, and may not be clamoring about the embargo, being tremendously busy with work in other directions. At the same time, the embargo should be placed squarely upon its protectionist

legs, and not on the basis of a slander against the health of Canadian stock. Furthermore, while it may be wisdom to finish the cattle in Canada, keeping the feed and fertility on Canadian farms, the Canadian should be trusted to exercise his own intelligence as to which method he will pursue, and it would unquestionably be of advantage to the cattle-raisers of this country to have two strings to their bow, viz., the privilege to ship cattle, either fat or as feeders.

The Cost of Production.

In another column an esteemed correspondent proposes concerted action and curtailing production as a remedy for low prices in certain farm products. Though not new, we do well as practical farmers, to give due consideration from time to time to suggestions of this nature. How to make farming pay better is a problem that appeals with more or less force to every one engaged in the business. Our correspondent's letter illustrates the different aspects a question may assume when approached from different viewpoints. Students of political economy have accepted as a tenet that the natural way to make the people in any given country more wealthy is to produce more wealth, or commodities representing wealth, than they require for personal uses, or to produce it more economically. They further assume that permanent artificial values cannot be maintained upon commodities in competitive markets, to the advantage of the producers. The case of coal oil cited, is one in a highly protected market, and under a government which, it has been emphatically asserted, has granted illegitimate assistance to the vendors thereof. Owing to the comparatively limited areas of crude oil, it has been possible also for a gigantic organization of a few men to control the raw material, the production of refined oil, and the prices. Canadians can hardly expect to influence British legislation to protect our food products there, to the disadvantage of the British consumer. For the present, at all events, our food products must be sold upon an open market, in competition with those from every other country that may choose to enter that market. Should the producers in any one country decide that they should receive a larger price, and refuse to sell their goods at prevailing rates, the consumer would simply say to some other nation, let us have more of this class of goods, and they would be forthcoming. To absolutely control the price of any commodity means that the consumption would need to be regulated, and, in the case of dairy products, for example, that the production of all the exporting countries, such as the U. S., Denmark, New Zealand, Australia, and so on, would have to be under central control or "cornered"—rather a stupendous task for human nature to accomplish. Again and again, men have cherished the idea that if only the individual producers of food products could be organized they could command the prices on their own commodities. Is it not an impracticable delusion? Assuming that every dairyman in Canada would agree to cut down the production of cheese and butter to exactly one-half, would not the dairymen of rival countries supply the shortage, keeping prices about at their old average? And if the Canadian dairymen cut the prices in two they would be facing another question, viz.: to what industry would they devote their energy and capital withdrawn from butter and cheese making, and what check would they have upon farmers of other countries embarking in these lines, and so bringing on another excess of production?

But it must not be supposed that because so