

FARM AND DAIRY & RURAL HOME

SOME CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS OF ONTARIO AGRICULTURE

W. F. Stephen, Huntingdon, Que.

Favorable and Unfavorable Criticism of Things and Conditions as Found on the Prize Farms which Competed in this, the Second Year of the Dairy Farms Competition.

It almost seems presumption for a Quebecker to write on the subject of Ontario agriculture, especially so when the province of Ontario in agriculture is supposed to lead the Dominion. I refer more particularly to that part that dairy farming plays in the agricultural world. Ontario boasts of her splendid farm homes, good live stock, fertile farms, and her abundant production in cereals, and the products of the dairy. However, being chosen, along with the esteemed and capable veteran agriculturist, Mr. Simpson Rennie, to inspect and pass judgment on the farms located in all parts of the Province entered in Farm and Dairy's final Prize Farms Competition in 1910, I have been brought into close touch with Ontario agriculture as shown on a number of the best farms in the Province. Thus I have observed the conditions of which I now write.

IMPROVED HOMES

It is not my desire to say much about the homes or home life, as these conditions are similar in our older provinces. On nearly all the farms visited there were houses of the latest design, equipped with modern conveniences. A few of the older houses had been lately remodelled, wide verandahs had been built, and a system of water supply installed. In this progressive age there is no reason why a farm house should not have modern heating, water supply, and sewerage systems. All these decrease labor and ensure health to the household. The dirty system of throwing the waste water at the back door or in a corner of the garden to breed flies by the millions is not to be tolerated on an up-to-date farm.

The nice lawns, good gardens, and fine orchards such as we found on the prize farms are all to be commended. Occasionally we noticed a garden, complete in every respect, with the addition of a multiplicity of different varieties of weeds. Likewise occasionally we found orchards that indicated neglect by the appearance of the over-wooded trees. The practice of some of putting a soiling crop on the orchard for turning under is commendable. This gives the necessary supply of plant food and acts as a mulch to retain the moisture during the drought of summer.

LACKING IN VENTILATION

Large, roomy barns, comfortable, convenient and well-lighted stables were much in evidence. Where a new building had lately been erected, the arrangement was, as a rule, more complete than when old buildings had been rearranged and rebuilt. In several instances remodelling of stables had been very satisfactorily done, and indicated economy in construction and labor. The majority of the stables would have stood more light; all were in need of a more perfect system of ventilation. The buildings in some cases were so arranged that all the manure from cattle and horses could be brought to one point

with little labor. Such an arrangement is commendable, since scattered buildings make a scattered manure pile.

Naturally some kind of a silo was seen at every farm; in some cases there were two or three of them. Of the square boarded, stave, concrete, and concrete block silos the latter is the most complete from every standpoint. The cost of construction may be against it, but it will repay the extra outlay because of its permanency and splendid ensilage-keeping qualities.

On a few of the farms were very convenient piggeries, and suitable poultry houses. Improvements could be made in both of these departments on a number of the farms. Root houses were in evidence almost everywhere; most of these were located conveniently to the stables.

THRIFT AND PROSPERITY

The neatness and order in evidence about quite a few of these places was most marked. Order,



W. F. Stephen.



Simpson Rennie.

The judges who placed the awards in this the second and final year of the Dairy Farms Competition.

system and method about the farm and steading is nearly always a sure indication of thrift and prosperity.

The milk-rooms and milk-stands in most cases were well arranged, convenient to the water and ice supply and were well kept. At one place, however, we were surprised to see the whey barrel placed beside the uncovered milk stand.

The live stock on the whole was of high quality. The horses in several cases were heavy drafters of good breeding. In a few cases the horses were somewhat inferior; lighter in build than would be expected.

CONTRAST WITH ADJOINING FARMS

The herds of registered cattle were made up of superior animals. I am pleased to note that considerable attention was given to rearing well the calves at these places. Our breeders of dairy cattle are realizing more than ever the necessity of rearing the calves well, and thus having strong vigorous cows capable of large production. Such cows as these were found on every farm visited, and they contrasted strangely with weaker herds that were seen on adjoining farms.

There must be greater improvement made in the herds that are on many dairy farms to-day if dairymen are to make the most of their busi-

ness. The purebred sire of high quality, the well reared heifer, the spring balance scale and Babcock test must be the factors employed in this improvement. The keeping of milk records is observed by too few dairymen, even in the progressive province of Ontario.

TOO FEW SHEEP ARE KEPT

Only on one farm visited were sheep kept, and it was a fine flock. A small flock of sheep may be kept with profit on every dairy farm. As scavengers and weed killers they excel. If Ontario farmers wish to successfully combat the weed evil they must call sheep to their aid.

We saw some good swine. There is probably more difference of opinion abroad in the land on the porker question than on any other. Some consider the hog the great money maker; others again think there is no money in raising and feeding hogs. Properly handled on a dairy farm they are profitable animals.

The breeds of poultry were varied. Some kept only one variety; on other places were seen specimens of various kinds. We found better returns were received where only one or two varieties were kept distinct, than where mixed varieties were kept. Even in poultry specialization pays.

CRITICISMS IN REGARD TO CROPS

There was noticed a wide variety of crops. Some splendid fields of fall wheat were seen. While this is a most profitable crop, it is favorable to spreading such weeds as false flax and chess. The crops expected to be grown on a dairy farm are alfalfa, red clover, some soiling crop, oats, barley, mangels or beets. In nearly all these cases we found these, and in one case flax was grown, the seed being ground with the grain in a proportion of one bushel of flax to 15 or 20 of mixed grain. This as a concentrate, with some bran, together with silage, alfalfa and clover as a roughage, makes an ideal balanced ration for feeding dairy cows.

IT PAYS TO UNDERDRAIN

The value of underdraining was demonstrated on every hand. Fine crops of clover, alfalfa, grain, roots and corn were seen on every acre of underdrained land; these contrasted most remarkably with the weak spots on surface drained land, or where there was a supposed natural drainage. It pays to underdrain.

A better rotation of crops and lay-out of farm in most cases would be desirable. A six year course is too long to give best results. A three or four year rotation is desirable to get large returns and keep weeds in check. With this in view the lay-out of the farm should be such that the fields would be of about equal size.

WEEDS MUCH IN EVIDENCE

Weeds were too much in evidence everywhere. I fear there is too much indifference in this matter, among the best of us. Couch grass, sow thistle, pennycress, false flax, bindweed, Canada thistles and many annuals took the place of the crop intended. There must be more activity in this battle with the weeds. Our weed laws must be better enforced, if we are to be high class farmers.

Some places were weak in fences. Not that they were lacking, as all had more or less rail