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EDITORIAL

A good crop means more to the country than the growers often think. Grave fears regarding the money stringency and financial conditions have almost entirely subsided since it was assured that a large crop would be safely harvested this season.

"We are determined not to sacrifice efficiency and permanency to haste for mileage," says the Secretary of the Massachusetts State Highway Commission. As a result, Massachusetts has a system of durable good roads, costing a remarkably small sum per mile for maintenance. Thoroughness pays. It is time to stop jumbling expensive road-surfacing metal into quagmire.

October is the season of mellowing fruit and dropping nuts; of corn husking and the ingathering of vegetables and roots; of brown furrows streaking the stubble fields; of sport and sports; of fattening game and migrating birds; of cool nights and crisp mornings that put tone in blood and nerves; of golden sunlight and purple haze—the halo of the whole twelve months. To live in October is to sample the rich wine of life.

A real-estate dealer in Saskatoon, who was formerly a farmer, suggests that the Dominion Government issue a farm-mortgage currency in notes of five, ten and twenty-dollar series against first mortgages on farm land, stamped "First-Mortgage Currency," and guaranteed by the government to be legal tender. Under this scheme the government might loan a free holder any sum from one hundred dollars up to fifty per cent. of the value of his farm for a term of thirty years, with the option to pay off said mortgage at any time after six months without notice or bonus. The mortgages would bear five per cent. interest for the first and second year, and three or four per cent. thereafter. Postmasters would execute the necessary papers. It is quite an idea, but we hardly expect to see it adopted. It might lead to political and other complications.

A comparatively new work is that carried on by District Representatives of the Ontario Department of Agriculture in connection with School Fairs. This is one of the most worthy branches of their varied means of reaching the agricultural public, and Fairs officered by school children, and with school children the sole exhibitors, cannot but have a lasting value in impressing upon the open minds of these young folks the importance of producing the best in the different classes of crops, poultry and eggs, covered by the prize list. The actual growing and attending to these crops and the poultry by the children themselves teaches methods of cultivation and care; the management of the Fair is a start in business training so necessary, and the competition has a great value in that it encourages interest in growing things, and raises the children's opinion of agriculture. These Fairs should get the undivided support of the grown-ups, and every adult in the sections where School Fairs are held should turn out and help the children along with their good work. Many are the surprises in store for people who attend one of these Fairs for the first time. It is a commendable undertaking, and is worthy of the best support.

Daily Repair on Roads.

Good roads mean more steady attendance of children at school through a larger portion of the year. Good roads mean denser rural population. Good roads mean the maintenance of better rural schools and better rural conditions. Good roads mean much to the cost-of-living struggle in the cities and towns. Good roads add to the comfort and happiness of the people as well as to their financial prosperity. Good roads have considerations not measured by dollars.

This terse epitome of the benefit of good roads appears in the first article of a journalistic campaign undertaken by the Toronto Globe in the interest of highway improvement and maintenance. A competent correspondent has been sent to make enquiry in New York and the New England States, where grave problems of cost of maintenance are facing existing systems; in Illinois, where they are grappling with 95,000 miles of middle-west dirt roads on the slogan, "Pull Illinois out of the mud"; in Missouri and Kansas, where Governors Major and Hodges have themselves donned overalls and handled pick and shovel in an endeavor to arouse interest and inaugurate a public-spirited revival in road-making; and in other States where special phases of the problem have developed. According to official estimates over \$1,500,000,000 has been spent on road improvement in the United States during the past twenty years. What has been done with the money? Wherein can the experience of the Republic prove of value to Canada?

Canadian effort has been considerable, even if results are not commensurate. British Columbia, in the last ten years, has spent fifteen millions on roads and bridges. Alberta has appropriated a million for north-and-south trunk roads, in addition to \$250,000 from current revenue. Saskatchewan has allotted five millions for trunk roads, in addition to her \$400,000 from current revenue. Under the Manitoba Highway Act, \$200,000 is set aside annually for provincial aid to main roads. Ontario spent \$850,000 last year on colonization roads in the North, and a quarter of a million on bridges. Local municipalities have been spending each year about 1,100,000 days of statute labor, and \$1,400,000 in cash. In 1911 the expenditure under the Highways Act was \$711,000, of which the province contributes a third. Quebec borrowed ten millions on 41-year bonds. Three provincial highways have been built. New Brunswick contributes \$100,000 annually for roads, and Nova Scotia \$250,000, the counties levying a special statute-labor tax which aggregates a like amount. In Prince Edward Island \$32,000 a year is laid out. Results? Take Ontario, for example. In the past twenty years the municipalities have spent nineteen million dollars on the highways, and twenty-two million days statute labor has been applied as well; yet, out of fifty thousand miles of highway in the older portions, only four thousand are now reported in a good state of repair. "Canadians have been too inclined to 'build' roads by an extensive system of repair." The consequences are immense ultimate cost, few miles of permanent road, and nearly all the mileage in a state of greater or less disrepair. Like conditions prevail elsewhere.

The solution of the difficulty was touched by General Roy Stone in an address at Buffalo, who

said that the great need of country roads on this continent was DAILY REPAIR. That is unquestionably correct. We shall never have a general condition of good roads without it. The stitch-in-time principle is the only sound or economical one, as "The Farmer's Advocate" has steadily contended.

New York State is looking to England for object lessons. One of the most important functions of local government in Britain is systematic oversight of the roads. Every County Council has a standing committee on roads, which takes charge of the highways and keeps them in repair at the expense of the rates. The committee is a large one, and is subdivided into a series of small committees, each with its own district. There is an inspector for every division of the county, and he employs a force of roadmenders and holds them responsible for the sections of the road assigned to them. The roadmender lives in a cottage on the line of the highway which he is required to keep in order, and he is constantly at work. He is at once a scavenger and a roadmender. He goes over the road and removes in a barrow everything that is unsightly. After a heavy rain his trained eye detects signs of wear at points where the water does not drain off rapidly, and he mends the break and restores the level by dumping a load of flint where it is needed. Supplies of material for roadmending are in reserve every half mile, where flint has been carted, broken up and left for his use, as mentioned by the writer of our current serial "Europe Through Canadian Eyes." He watches his section of the road all the year around, and keeps it neat, tidy, free from litter and in perfect repair. And he receives sharp warning from the inspector if he neglects his work. France employs 80,000 patrolmen to keep her roads in repair.

That is the kind of system we need, with some modifications to adapt it to our conditions. And above all things we must keep it out of politics. A federal or provincial bureau of that kind would be very liable to develop into a great political machine. The auspices should be local. We have politics enough in municipal matters, but usually not so partizan as in the larger spheres.

Just a word about the trunk-road scheme. There has been some little agitation to have provincial and federal governments build great through highways for the special convenience of automobile traffic. "The Farmer's Advocate" believes the public interest will be better served by systems of municipal highways radiating from the important market and social centres. This will prove of much greater advantage to rural residents, will avoid the political evils of extensive bureaucratic control, will conduce to economy and keep the administration of the highways in the hands of the municipalities, where it belongs. Government grants should take the form of assistance and quasi-supervisory direction, and should extend to maintenance.

In conclusion let us quote this extra good paragraph from the newspaper correspondent's admirable article.

"Good roads in Britain are * * * a practical detail of common-sense, efficient local administration. Nobody ever feels called upon there to preach the gospel of good roads. The English people have them because they pay for them, and insist upon having them kept in order. The poorest rustic loves the country road which leads to his humble cottage. It is his pleasure ground—his rightful share in the goody heritage of a well-governed country."