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EDITORIAL

Our Big Industry—Summer-Fallowing.

The summer-fallow is the most considerable circumstance in the industry of the West during the present week. Estimates of the extent of the area that is being turned lower side up or torn into particles can be nothing more than conjectural. It means that thousands of men, horses and implements are employed, a quietus given to million myriads of weeds and a seed-bed prepared for about one-quarter of next year's wheat crop.

The summer-fallow is essentially a circumstance of pioneer agriculture before the proper proportion of land and labor has been established. Just as soon as labor becomes sufficiently plentiful to make it possible to crop all the land a man owns that is arable, then summer-fallows are abandoned for a more profitable and rational system. Incidental with such an adjustment go increased markets which demand those products of the farm that are usually called "truck" and this stimulates the production of those products. So long as our population is sparse and cities few, small and scattered, the land will be devoted to the production of those products that best stand shipping and that can be handled with the least expense and attention. It is not a question of whether or not a system of summer-fallowing and grain-growing is the best in principle and practice for the success of agriculture—most people are satisfied that it is not—but pioneer circumstances demand a temporary compromise between sound principles and successful practice.

It is one of the encouraging indications of the practical intelligence of our farmers that they readily abandon summer-fallowing, as so many of them are doing and have done in the older settled districts, just as soon as their individual circumstances will permit. It is no easy matter to drop a practice that has given a measure of success, that has become familiar to the farmer, and in following which he has developed a certain habit of farming, and to adopt new systems and practices whose sole recommendation as far as each man is concerned who is not familiar with them, lies in the fact that their basic principles are right.

These remarks are not written with the object of trying to induce men to continue summer-fallow indefinitely, but rather to set down the reasons why summer-fallow has a place upon our Western farms and to direct the enquiry of each man to his own particular circumstances, with the object of coming to a conclusion as to whether or not he is in a position to adopt more progressive methods. It must not be forgotten that there are many farms in Manitoba and Saskatchewan to-day, large farms too, that are being conducted without the use of the summer-fallow and invariably these farms produce the largest yields of grain and return the largest clear profit per acre of land.

The Plow and Character.

The plowing match season is practically over in Manitoba. The plowing matches where held are usually conducted under the auspices of the Farmers' Institutes. Observation of these plowing matches over some years will convince anyone that their value is not alone in furnishing a competition and the excitement of it for a day, but that a match in a community is but the culmination of a year's and often a lifetime's consistent practice with the plow—not merely the trudging back and forth with a team and plow,

but *plowing*; plowing where every detail of the work is carefully executed, weed roots cut off, the land pulverized in turning, weeds and stubble buried where by their decay they will add to the fertility of the soil, and the whole executed with a thoroughness that admits of no advantage to weeds through uneven work by unsteady hands. Training such as a plowman puts himself through in preparation for a match affects the whole character of the man. It makes him patient, observant, ingenious, deliberate and confident in his ability, attributes that men in every walk of life should cultivate and which can be developed in no other work about the farm so well as in plowing.

The example of the best plowman in a community is of considerable value to the growing boys who have an opportunity to see his work. Few things so readily and so forcibly command a boy's attention as straight, even furrows and often the sight of them is his first inspiration to develop the qualities of his character mentioned above. From such a sight he gets the conviction that there is an opportunity upon the farm to exercise the God-given ambition which lurks in every human breast to produce some work that is creditable, that is superior. This is the fundamental element of good citizenship.

The plowing match deserves encouragement and it might not be out of place to suggest that those Institutes which conduct plowing matches be placed in an honor class and receive special assistance from the superintendent, not necessarily of a monetary nature, but of service in the way of bringing together the best plowmen from the different districts. This would be lending aid where it is needed to deserving institutions, not as is too often the case, doling out Government pay to institutions whose chief reason for existence is to meet once or twice a year and elect officers in order to receive a Government grant. The country has not enough plowmen whose work is above the average, but it has too many organizations whose work is of no consequence whatever.

The Cultivation Propaganda in Alberta.

Alberta has been hearing the gospel of soil cultivation from one of the best preachers of it, a Mr. Campbell, from across the line. About twelve months ago we published a synopsis of Mr. Campbell's theory and practice of cultivation and at different times since have had occasion to refer to his work and teachings. His key is nothing more nor less than the application of the well-known fact that by cultivating the top layer of the soil the moisture below is prevented from evaporating and is available for the roots of plants. Many men have known this and have practiced it more or less extensively, especially upon corn land, but this man Campbell, living in a country where rainfall is light and where a few pounds of moisture conserved at the roots of the plants exercise a more noticeable effect than the same amount would in a country of greater precipitation of moisture, has become an enthusiast upon the subject and preaches the system in season and out of season. For this reason he has attained an international reputation and has been lauded and blessed by farmers and real estate men and land holding railway companies all over that sparsely vegetated area that lies to the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains in the central part of the continent.

The actions of the enthusiast bring him publicity, and whether honor and glory accompany them depends not so much upon the logic of their teaching as upon the readiness with which these teachings can be turned to personal advantage. Mr. Campbell's doctrine, or rather, to be more exact, the doctrine over which he has become an enthusiast, is easy of application and its benefits almost immediate; hence the success of its able preacher in attaining a wide reputation

and the gratitude of a large class of people whom his enthusiasm has inspired to help themselves.

Perhaps it would only be just to Mr. Campbell to say that he was one of the first to demonstrate the advantages of providing a deep soil by plowing where shallow cultivation was to be practised for the conserving of moisture. This is a phase of the moisture saving propaganda that has not received so much attention as the surface cultivation. Characteristically, we have attached most importance to the operation immediately before our eyes and have not enquired so deeply into the associated conditions which effect the results, in this case the depth of the cultivated area. Mr. Campbell has drawn the attention of the agricultural community to the significance of deep plowing in a dry climate and has by reference to his own work and that of others been able to demonstrate the soundness of his teachings. His sojourn in that part of the Canadian West that is so rapidly changing from the ranching to a farming industry, gives that district the advantage of years of experimental work and saves the expense of experimental failures.

Dairying Reviving.

It is to be hoped that the Manitoba Department of Agriculture will not rest satisfied with the work accomplished by the dairy "special." It was a good start, but the pull to place dairying in a position commensurate with its significance to the province is a long one and one in which steady work is required. The flying visits of the "special" gave something of an electric spark of vitality to the industry, a sort of a morning call to arouse indifferent dairymen and farmers. The attendance at the demonstrations given upon the "special" was good. The novelty of the affair probably attracted many who were not particularly interested in dairying, and consequently the effectiveness of the work done may be largely diluted. Add to this also the fact that it is invariably those who least need suggestions from outside sources that attend such meetings and it will be seen that just to the extent that this was the case will the actual value of the tour be lessened. What the dairy industry needs comes under two heads: It needs a general fostering and broad advocating; then it needs work among individual farmers—what has been called the rifle bullet method—by which each man's objections are met and set aside and his difficulties solved. This latter is usually the class of work followed in districts where dairying has been established and where an effort is being made to raise the average quality of the product, the productivity of the cows and the total of the output. The dairy special has given a general impetus to dairying and the inspectors of creameries and cheese factories are working among the individual farmers. It requires both, and with each lending its influence there should be brighter days ahead for the industry.

Is it Dead Wood.

The attendance at the June meetings of the Farmers' Institute was not good. There must be a reason for this apart from the fact that farmers are busy. It might be pertinent to ask if the Farmers' Institute as an organization are serving their purpose in any of the Western provinces, and if not what can be done to make them of use and value to the provinces and to the individual farmers. It is one of the characteristics of Western farmers that they want utility in their organizations and when this essential is lacking they are quite indifferent to the welfare of the institution. In Farmers' Institutes there is a vast potentiality for good, but it requires developing. This is one of the problems of the Ministers of Agriculture, their deputies, and of each individual who has more than a selfish interest in his community.