

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT FARM TRACTOR OPERATION

By Arch S. Merrifield

PERSONALLY, I like the suggestion that I call a "spade a spade, and give true facts." Some have attempted this very feat, but when it is all said and done, they have usually found that the other fellow's opinion was about as good as theirs, and in such cases the writer of such articles is merely airing his personal opinions. The very faults he might condemn in some tractors would prove especially pleasing or adaptable on a neighboring farm. For instance, some man will tell you that the four-wheel type or the two-wheel type or the three-wheel type of tractor will be the ultimate machine, and about this time along comes the "caterpillar" and walks away with the honors under certain soil conditions.

Then you must contend with the matter of speed. It has been common practice for the manufacturers to rate their products by the number of plows they could pull; for instance, a two, three or four-bottom machine. The salesman says: "We handle three bottoms under all conditions." And about this time another manufacturer arrives with the statement: "Yes, they handle three bottoms all right, at one and three-quarter miles per hour, but our machine will handle three bottoms at a speed of two and one-half miles per hour." This, of course, makes quite a difference in the amount of plowing accomplished in a ten-hour day.

One farmer wants to plow, another wants a machine for belt work, another has a hay farm, one has low, swampy land, another a high, rolling farm—each man has his individual requirements. Now, would it not be pure guesswork for any writer to say that this or that type of tractor was the ideal machine for all of these varying conditions? Experience has proved that certain automobiles fill certain requirements. Why not, then, find the tractor that suits your conditions or type of work, and buy it?

Here's a case in point. A farmer down in Mississippi has 150 acres of alfalfa. This is the principal crop. Practically all of his work consists of cutting and putting up alfalfa. Naturally, the mowing-machine is his principal tractor-drawn implement. One man with a team of mules or horses can handle one mower. It certainly would not be a paying investment for this man to buy a tractor which would require a man to operate the machine, in addition to a man on the mower.

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Consequently, we find him buying a tractor that can be operated from the seat of the mowing machine, and which will pull at least two mowers. Here we have the elimination of four mules, while the man power remains the same. He only needs the mules during the harvesting of the crop, and consequently he effects a real saving on feed and care during the time they would ordinarily be idle.

No one doubts now that the tractor is here, and that it has come to stay, and the development is really remarkable.

What will a tractor accomplish in certain work? Information of this sort would have to be of a general nature, for while one man might plow ten acres per day, the next man with the same tractor might not accomplish half the work.

The writer put in ten years selling engines and other farm equipment among the farmers, and from personal experience it is impossible to tell what one farmer will do with the machine, just because his next-door neighbor has accomplished some wonderful result. I have "chased and chased" to keep engines running for some farmers, when the man on the neighboring farm might buy the same size and make of engine and it would never be necessary to go near it. Purely a question of care and skill on the part of the operator. With all due respect or farmers, hundreds of whom are numbered among my best friends, there are some who could not run a wheelbarrow on a cement sidewalk without help, while others have no trouble whatever with threshing rigs and

other heavy power machinery. It is useless to say that this or that particular tractor would accomplish the same results in the hands of both of these classes of farmers.

Some farmers are constantly trying to build their equipment over to suit themselves. They seem to feel that the fellow in the designing room does not understand their particular requirement, and then when they have misadjusted the outfit until it will not perform properly, they immediately condemn the machine for not being "fool proof."

The Milkman (to suspicious customer): "You won't find nothing wrong with that milk, ma'am. All our milk is paralyzed by a government anarchist."