

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE

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Manitoba Crop Conditions.

The excessive drought which prevailed throughout the wheat sections during the growing months was broken by general rains the last few days of June and the early part of July. The conditions on the average farm, however, are entirely exceptional, and it were the veriest guesswork to prophesy on the results of the harvest at this date. With the soil heated above ordinary temperature, and in fine mellow condition, the abundant moisture and July warmth will cause a marvelously rapid growth, and in cases where the rains came before the grain was headed out, the results will certainly be far better than could have been hoped for. Unfortunately, however, much of the wheat was headed out at 5 or 6 inches in height before the rains came, and consequently one could find immediately after the rains, in many fields wheat headed out and other plants just starting from seed sown at the same time. Much of the straw will of course be short, too short to make sheaves, but if even six or eight bushels of fairly good wheat can be secured per acre it may yield as much profit as an ordinary 20-bushel crop. The cost of harvesting, threshing, twine, etc., will be little, and the price per bushel in all likelihood will be near the dollar mark. In '86, which was an extremely dry season, the writer harvested a crop of wheat which only yielded 6 bushels per acre and was so short that it was necessary to fasten willow brush to the binder reel in order to sweep the grain on to the platform. The binder attachment was taken off the binder and an arrangement like a box put in its place, provided with a door hinged at the top and manipulated with an iron rod in the same way as the "butter" on some binders is regulated. By this means as soon as the box is filled with heads it can be dumped out in windrows.

The rains have in many districts greatly helped the hay crop and have improved pastures everywhere so that the live-stock and dairy industries are greatly benefited and stock will doubtless be in better condition this fall than usual. The conditions during the early part of the season in the ranching districts of Alberta were particularly favorable, the stock wintered well and export shipments commenced early in July, with cattle fatter than last fall. Throughout Eastern Alberta and Saskatchewan there was plenty of moisture throughout the growing season, and crops in these districts are fully up to the average.

Hold on to Some of the Hogs.

A great rush of hogs have been coming forward for the past couple of months. The market price was well sustained during the greater part of the time. A year ago there was a dearth of hogs. Tons of dressed pork was imported to supply the local demand. People have been rapidly breeding up again, but the prospective crop failure compelled everyone to unload. Hundreds of sows, well forward in pig, have been slaughtered, and there is every probability of another hog famine next year. Those who can possibly supply feed will almost certainly be well paid by holding on to their hogs and not joining in the rush to unload at any price.

It is officially estimated that the wheat crop of India is 181,000,000 bushels, against 238,000,000 bushels last season, and 227,000,000 bushels, the average of five years past.

Unofficial reports from the Paris Exposition state that many first and other prizes have been captured by Canadian fruit, as well as the Grand Prize for the forestry, fish, game, mineral and agricultural exhibits.

The Great Increase in Grass Acreage.

One of the most encouraging items referred to in the Manitoba Government crop report of June was the great increase in the acreage sown to cultivated grasses, from less than 2,000 acres in 1880 to 5,000 acres this year. Every farmer who takes the trouble to study out the soil conditions realizes the necessity of getting root fiber and humus back into the soil which has been worn-out by constant cropping and summer-fallowing. The past spring has demonstrated more emphatically than ever the importance of root fiber in the soil in order to prevent drifting, but it has been an unfavorable season for grass seed. Where sown early, the seed, in most cases, was killed by the excessive heat and drought. Where, from one cause or another, the grass seed was not sown until the rains came, a good catch may be looked for. It seems now generally to be conceded that in this country of light average rainfall it is well to sow all grass seed pretty deep. Putting them in with a drill gives good results on most lands. Throughout the lighter soil districts of the western half of the Province and in the Territories it seems that the grasses all do much better when sown by themselves without any nurse crop, but in the heavy, moister soils of the eastern half of the Province they do equally well sown with a crop. This, of course, saves a year, and where it proves satisfactory it is the much more economical way of seeding down. A good many have had successful catches by mixing the grass seed with the wheat and sowing with shoe drill.

The Grain Harvesting.

The hay crops in most parts of Ontario and the Eastern Provinces has been a fair average one, though in some districts, where the drought of last summer was prolonged and severe, the young clover plants were burnt out, and the yield of the older meadows has been light, while in Manitoba, owing to the lack of rain during the spring months, the hay crop will return a low yield. It is therefore probably correct to describe the crop on the whole as a light one, and the deficiency in this class of fodder for stock feeding emphasizes the importance of harvesting the grain crops, which in all the provinces except Manitoba, we are glad to know, are fairly good, at such time and in such manner as to secure, if possible, a good quality of both straw and grain. Straw that is cut before the grain is fully ripe, and saved with little exposure to rains, may be profitably utilized for feeding purposes, especially when chaffed and mixed with ensilage or pulped roots; and when the supply of hay is short there is the greater need to make use of straw in this way. Of course, weather conditions and probabilities have to be taken into account in harvesting operations. A wet season makes it difficult and sometimes impossible to manage the cutting and curing satisfactorily, but in average harvest weather as we get it in Canada, it is, we believe, the settled opinion of most successful farmers that it is true economy to cut all classes of grain before they become fully ripe. The grain, if cut while in the dough state and while there is some sap in the straw, will continue to draw nourishment from that supply, and will ripen in the shade of the stook with less shrinkage than if allowed to stand till dead ripe, and will take on a fresher color, while it can also be handled with less loss from shelling, and the straw will be much more valuable for feeding purposes on account of having been cut and cured with a good percentage of the sap in it. If from want of drainage or other causes parts of a field are later in ripening than others, of course judgment must be exercised in harvesting, and it may be necessary to allow the more forward portions to get fully ripe before the backward parts can be safely cut, but in favorable weather a safe

average may be struck, and if a considerable part is on the green side it will be wisdom to set the binder to make smaller sheaves or to bind them less tightly than in a more uniformly ripe crop; but to avoid the danger of its musting in the mow, care should be observed to have the straw well dried before it is stored, as musty straw is of even less value for fodder than overripe straw, and the color of the grain is apt to be injured by the heating in the mow or stack.

The importance of early harvesting in the Northwest, or the cutting of the grain as soon as it is reasonably fit, is emphasized by the liability to damage from early frosts in those provinces, and the lesson has been pretty thoroughly learned there from experience. In the provinces in which fall wheat is grown and it is desired to follow a crop of barley or peas with wheat, it is important to get the first crop off the ground as early as possible in order to have the land plowed and worked down to a fine tilth before sowing, taking advantage to cultivate and harrow after every rain to conserve the moisture and prepare a favorable seed-bed. As it not infrequently happens that the last of the harvest runs into unfavorable weather, the wise farmer will push the work whenever the crop is fit and get it safely stored as soon as possible. There is a sweet sense of satisfaction in having the crops safe in barn or stack even if the weather continues fine, but that feeling is happily intensified when a rainy season follows, and the farmer reflects on what might have been had he taken things easy and failed to make the best use of the time. On the other hand, long weeks of weary work and a wasted crop may be the price paid for indifference, if the golden days in which they might have been secured are allowed to pass without being improved as they might have been. Canadian harvest weather is, as a rule, less fickle than that of most countries, but the weather is an uncertain quantity even in Eldorado, and cannot long be safely trusted, and the injunction, "Do with your might what your hands find to do," is never more timely than during the harvest days.

A writer in an English contemporary points out that fewer horses were imported from Canada during May than during a corresponding month for the past six years, but they were of first-class quality and brought higher prices. The diminution in numbers is perhaps due to the large numbers gone from Canada this year direct to South Africa for use in the war. In this connection we notice that one of the *Toronto Globe's* correspondents calls attention to the excellent service rendered by the Canadian horses at the front, where their stamina and intelligence have enabled them to sustain to a very marked degree the unusual strain put upon them, their powers of endurance being notably superior to many others under similar circumstances.

The prospect for the summer fairs coming in this month and next are certainly very encouraging, all things considered. The Winnipeg and Brandon exhibitions will doubtless be especially well attended, and others in proportion. The welcome rains of the last few weeks, although belated, have done a vast amount of good and have served to brighten the outlook for crops and stock very materially. The fact that in most sections the commencement of harvest will be later than usual will afford leisure to attend the fairs, where useful lessons may be gleaned from the exhibition of stock and other products of the farm, and where, by comparing notes with each other on the best methods of managing crops and stock under varying circumstances, farmers may be materially benefited. The energy and enterprise displayed by the managers and directors of these exhibitions deserves encouragement, and should meet with the appreciation of the people, at least to the extent of attending and thus adding their quota towards meeting the expenses incurred.