

Jas. A. Caskey, His Farm, His Holsteins, and His Boys

The Farming Methods of a Holstein Breeder of 18 Years' Standing



J. A. Caskey.

IN 1897 Henry Stevens & Sons, of Lacona, N. Y., appeared at the Toronto Exhibition with their pure-bred Holsteins and were successful in getting away with the lion's share of the prize money. The report of the Holstein exhibit at the fair that year as published in "Farming," of which Farm and Dairy is the lineal descendant, shows, however, that the prize ribbons were not secured without keen competition. "Holsteins,"

made a magnificent display, and Mr. Stevens, who was present with his herd, which has made such an enviable record on the other side of the line, was amazed at the number and quality of the animals on exhibition. He declared them to be anything he had ever seen." It was evident to those who attended the fair and took an interest in dairy cattle, that Holsteins in Canada were coming into their own.

Amongst the onlookers at the ringside was a young farmer from Hastings Co., Ont. He was a born dairyman. His father, recognizing the keen interest that he took in the milk cheques came up after he had begun to do the milking, had given over to him the full management of the herd. Many young men would have been satisfied with this, but not so our friend from Hastings. He was looking forward to the time when he would have charge of a herd that was something more than "just cows." Hence his presence at the ringside. That display of Holsteins fired his imagination and settled the question as to which of the dairy breeds he would select. He determined to be a Holstein breeder. The following year he went over to Lacona, and from the Stevens herd selected a bull and 11 two-year-old heifers. In due time these were comfortably quartered on the Hastings county farm, and Jas. A. Caskey had launched out on his career as a Holstein breeder.

It was in the week of the breeders' meetings in Toronto last winter that I first met Mr. Caskey. On the way to the city, several of us were discussing agricultural matters when a man in an adjoining seat joined in the conversation. Needless to say, I was delighted to find that this was none other than Mr. Caskey, whom I had frequently heard of as a breeder of Holsteins and as connected with the Belleville sales. We had not been talking long when it became evident that there were many things concerning his work that

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should prove of interest to Our Folks. It was then that I determined to pay him a visit and become more familiar with his methods of farming. About two weeks ago the opportunity presented itself.

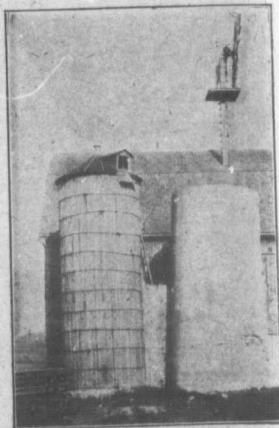
Mr. Caskey was busy cutting oats when I arrived. Some would have had things in poor shape to spare the time necessary to show one around the farm at such an important juncture in the year's operations. Not so our friend. "We always try to keep the work well up," he explained, "so that if anyone calls to look over the stock on the farm, we have time to show them around." That is good farming. It is also good business, if the two can be differentiated, especially for a breeder, whose visitors may be prospective customers. The binder was given over to the charge of the hired man, and we proceeded on a tour of inspection over the farm.

Corn, Alfalfa and Clover.

Mr. Caskey is, of course, best known for his work as a breeder. The story of his success as a producer and developer of good Holsteins, will, when it is written, add an interesting chapter to Canadian Holstein history. To give a detailed account of his breeding operations is not, however, within the purpose of this article. The object is to give Our Folks an insight into his farming methods, for it must be remembered that for the greater part of the year our best breeders are hard working farmers, wrestling with the same problems and meetings with the same encouragements and discouragements as the great mass of men who win their living from the soil.

As would be expected on a farm largely given over to dairying, the rotation includes a large acreage of corn and clover. Mr. Caskey seemed surprised when I told him that reports were coming in showing that in many districts corn is not a good crop this year. He said his corn never looked better, and conducted me back to the lane to an 11-acre field that carried one of the best crops of corn I have seen this season. With the exception of a hollow through which the water drains from other fields, there was a good even stand of corn, of a rich, dark-green color, and at that date (August 14), considerably higher than a man's head. "Cultivation is what made this field," said Mr. Caskey. "As soon as the weather allowed us to get on the land we put a man and team at work with a cultivator. We kept them going steadily for two weeks." The district, in common with other parts of the province, has suffered from the severe drought, but an examination of the soil showed that it was in excellent

condition, that the moisture was well up around the roots and apparently plentiful. Another smaller field of corn brings the acreage of this important crop up to 14, and the yield will be ample to fill the two large silos provided for taking care of it. "My first experience with alfalfa was the most



Summer and Winter the Caskey Holsteins get their ensilage regularly every day.

—Photo by an Editor of Farm and Dairy.

satisfactory," said Mr. Caskey, as we climbed over the fence that separates the corn and the alfalfa fields. "Some years ago I seeded a piece down with Turkestan, and it did splendidly for a few seasons. Then an ice winter came and killed it all out. After that I tried alfalfa two or three times, buying ordinary seed, but although it always came up well and looked promising in the fall, I never succeeded in getting any of it through the first winter. Last year I got some more Turkestan seed and put it in. This spring it did not look very well, and I decided to plow it up, thinking that I had another alfalfa failure registered against me. But when we put the plow in the ground we found that its roots were strong and thick, and so we spared it. We got about two loads an acre from the first cutting, and I am going to try to get seed from this second crop. If I could only get some home-grown seed, I believe that my alfalfa troubles would be over."

It was hard to determine, at the time of my visit, whether or not much seed would set. The blossoms had partly fallen, the period of full bloom having been passed a few days before. Some seed pods were visible, and doubtless many more would develop. Mr. Caskey was willing to lose a cutting of hay for the chance of securing a crop of seed. His success in the venture will later be given to our readers.

Asked if he found it necessary to inoculate his fields, he answered that he had not. The only explanation of this was that given to him by Mr. Henry Glendenning at an Institute meeting. He had asked this well known alfalfa expert why it was that he had never needed to inoculate his fields, and had been asked in turn if there was any sweet clover on his place. Upon stating that there was some around the house and barn, Mr.

Glendenning had told me that it was not so clear. Some of the best alfalfa land would be a mixture of the two, and this means it would be a mixture of the two, which would therefore with the bacteria required for its growth.

Red clover is still the best of the kind, and all means of the roller. The yield from 15 to 16 lbs. is the practice of using the

FREQUENTLY I receive five alfalfa growers asking for criticism such letter brings forward a statement that may be a writer of this particular district where alfalfa grows. He, however, has any. Last spring he failed his usual good judgment his clover seed, and took

proprietor of the village give him. Results? He stands, due to seed of alfalfa and there are indications have a fine crop of new weeds to contend with want to keep such a hay another year, and not he will be absolutely hay crop next year. That he cut this year we red clover only, and less for a second year.

"Why can't I," writes farmer," plow my clover spring, work them deep and drag and seed season to alfalfa? Some of their alfalfa without get a crop the first year till July first or there middle of May or there a good crop the same



The Caskey boys and some of their father's pure-bred Holstein calves.
—Photo by an Editor of Farm and Dairy.