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RURAL HOME

We Welcome Practical Progressive Ideas

The Recognized Exponent of Dairying in Canada

Trade increases the wealth and glory of a country; but its real strength and stamina are to be looked for among the cultivators of the land—Lord Chatham.

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No. 32

An Object Lesson in Dairy Herd Improvement

A Farmer Who Turned a \$300 Deficit Into a Substantial Profit, Tells His Story

Now, what you better do think of, how many of you have stop cows than you had twenty years ago? Have you done your part in bringing up the production of your herds? If you are keeping a 4,500-lb. cow, do you realize what it would mean to you if you could put in her place a 6,500-lb. cow? The minute you made this change you would automatically reduce the cost of producing any given amount of milk from 20 to 22 per cent. Why? Because the cow producing the smaller amount consumes just as much roughage and requires just as much time and care as the other cow. The expenses outside of the grain cost are practically the same.

I will tell you briefly what I did in my own herd and why I did it. I was forced to do one of three things— to increase the cost of production, because I could not increase the price for which I was selling—or to go out of the dairy business and adopt some other system of farming—or to go off the farm.

In the year 1898 my father died, leaving me the management of the home farm, heavily mortgaged. At his death I had not only the farm, but the obligations which had to be met. For a while everything went along smoothly. We had what was considered a good dairy herd at that time. We were getting a living and now and then I would reduce the mortgage a little; but as the price of feed and labor began to advance, increasing the cost of production of the herd and, as the price of the product did not advance in proportion, the margin became less and less until, at the end of the year 1905, when we took an inventory and tried to settle the bills and start on a good business basis for the next year, I found myself some \$200 or \$300 short of enough to meet the expenses. I assure you it was a serious problem to me, with the conditions hanging over me and with no other methods that I could adopt, so far as I knew, that would change conditions. I took a day off and used my head a little.

After doing that, I said to myself, "We have here 16 cows. There are 16 machines that I am using to convert the products of my farm into cash—a cash income and a profit, if I can get any. They are the market for the crops I grow, and if those machines can handle that more economically, my income will be so much more. If one can handle what she consumes more economically than the other, she is the more efficient machine." So after thinking the matter over carefully, I decided that on the first day of January I would open an account with each individual cow. I knew that I had some good cows as every dairyman has. I thought perhaps I might have some that were not as good as I could get.

On the first day of January I opened an account with each cow, as I am going to tell you briefly just what I found after a year's work. I found that the best cow I owned at the end of the year 1914 had produced 6,115 lbs. of milk, or 339 cans of 8 3/4 quarts each, and her average test was 4.2 per cent. She produced 254.94 lbs. of butterfat. She made a pound of butter for every 20.7 lbs. of milk. In those days of labor cost and feed cost that was a profitable cow.

For the purpose of comparison, I want to divide that herd of 16 cows into two herds of 8 cows each, one containing the 5 best and the other the 8 poorest cows. The 8 best cows in 1914 averaged 255 cans of milk and 255 lbs. of 85 per cent butter. The 8 poorest cows averaged 192 cans of milk and 200 lbs. of butter—a difference of 58 lbs. of butter per cow. You see what that means in cash. The 65 cents of milk at 86 cents a can would amount to \$56.96, or a total difference on the 8 cows of \$395.68.

I want to show you what I was able to accomplish after ten years' work. The records of that first year were a lesson to me. I had to take another half day to study and find out what was best. I decided that

I would dispose of all the cows in my herd that did not produce \$10 worth more of dairy products than the feed cost. That would give me a basis to start on. Then I would go out and buy a pure-bred sire from a good producing cow out of a herd whose records were kept and I could judge from the production point of view. I have followed that work from but I have weeded out the poor cows. Instead of 5.1, which would mean 488.77 lbs. of butterfat. I have sold the unprofitable cows, until in 1914 we had as a best cow one that would produce 9,580 lbs. of milk, or 532 cans, with an average butterfat test of 5.1, which would mean 488.77 lbs. of butterfat.

For purposes of comparison I want to take the best half of the herd in 1904 and the best half of the herd in 1914. In 1904 the best half of the herd produced an average of 253 cans of milk, and 255 lbs. of butter. In 1914, the best 16 cows averaged 7,144 lbs. of milk, or 397 cans, 379.84 lbs. of butterfat, or 448.87 lbs. of 85 per cent butter—a difference of 139 cans of milk and 188.87 lbs. of butter. This was an increase of 54 per cent in milk production and 75 per cent in butter production. Let us see what the value of the increase is. One hundred and thirty-nine cans of milk at 66 cents per can is worth \$77.84. Now we come to what it costs to produce that milk. In our herd we feed on

the basis of one pound of grain to 3 1/2 lbs. of milk. We claim that the cow producing the extra milk does not consume any more roughage than the other cow, but she does need more grain—more concentrates. Figuring on the basis of one pound of grain to 3 1/2 lbs. of milk, and figuring grain at what it was paying for it last month, the extra milk would cost \$18.05. The net value of the increase in milk would, therefore, be \$59.78 per cow, which in a herd of 20 cows would amount to \$1,195.50.

I want you to look very carefully at these figures. I want you to realize what it would mean to you if you could increase the production of your herds to that extent, and I want you to know that I have had to labor under the same disadvantages, and meet the same obstacles, the same drawbacks, that every farmer has to meet. We meet with these at some time, all of us, but if we continue at the job, using our best judgment in the weeding out and selection of cows, and in the breeding, we can all do so improve our conditions materially, and I see no reason why we cannot improve them to the extent that I have been able to do.—From Bulletin of Maine Department of Agriculture.

A Twenty-three Year Success

The Record of an Ontario Beef Ring

By Jas. R. Alexander.

JUST ten years ago this summer I worked for the season on a farm near Norwich, in Oxford County, Ont. One of the local institutions that was then giving universal satisfaction was the beef ring. Farm families far and near were supplied with fresh meat the whole summer through by "the ring." A couple of weeks ago I was back in Norwich visiting some of the old friends and found the beef ring just entering its twenty-third year and with the same man still in charge—Mr. E. B. Palmer, well known as the senior member of the firm of E. B. Palmer & Sons, breeders of Ayrshire cattle. On the day of my visit Mr. Palmer had just killed the first animal for 1918.

"This is the first day of our twenty-third year of continuous operation," Mr. Palmer said, "so you see we have passed our majority. In fact, the members of the ring gave me a surprise party to celebrate our coming of age. It was a year ago last fall, and we had just finished our twenty-one years, when the neighbors came in and we spent a most enjoyable evening."

"A beef ring is a splendid thing when it is properly conducted," continued Mr. Palmer. "In our ring we have just 16 shares and we operate for just 16 weeks, starting with the first week in June. This carries me through the hot weather, when fresh meat must be had frequently if it is to keep. The owners of each share in the ring must provide one beast each season. Almost all of the shares are held by two farmers to each share, although there are a few shares held by three men. Each share gets all the different pieces of a beef in the season."

"And how are values adjusted?" I asked. "Some animals might be worth a great deal more than others."

"At the first of the season," answered Mr. Palmer, "we get together and set a price for the following few months. This year the price is 15 cents a pound. On this basis each share is credited with the value of the animal contributed and debited with the value of the meat they get. I keep the books, and at the end of the year an adjustment is made."

"It's 23 years of success is pretty good proof of the satisfactory service that this beef ring has given. It is only one of several successful rings in that part of Ontario."

Labor and Crops.

NEWS comes from Washington that a great army of harvesters, recruited by the United States Employment Service, will soon move north to aid in the harvesting of the grain crops of Western Canada. This move, in accordance with an agreement between the two governments, and should go far towards solving the labor problem on the prairies this year. A partial failure of the crops in many districts has, unfortunately, reduced the need for outside labor, but there is still room for the help of thousands of men in harvesting the 1918 crop and in the fall work preparatory for a great acreage in 1919.

Harvesting is now well under way in Ontario, and prospects are for a splendid crop of barley and a good crop of spring wheat. Oats are short in the straw, but are heading out well. Potatoes promise better than usual, but disease is prevalent in many districts. Roots on a reduced acreage, will be a good crop. Corn will again be under average, but better than was expected a month ago. Unfortunately an army of harvesters cannot easily be mobilized in Ontario, nor could they be used to so good advantage in groups as in the West. Much help will be needed, however, and the present offers a grand opportunity for the townspeople of Eastern Canada to send their aid where it will be needed in the next month. The suggestion that every town and village should have its employment agency where willing townspeople and farmers in need of help may get together is an excellent one. But if such action is going to be taken it must be taken immediately.